

Labrador Breed Council Health Sub-Committee meeting held remotely via Zoom minutes on Wednesday 20th January 2021 at 6pm

Present: Joy Venturi Rose, Lynda Heron, Fiona Braddon, Fiona Maclean, Elaine Grummitt, Kira Leith-Ross, Kate Smith, Kirsty Jones, Sussie Wiles.

There were no absentees

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Mr Bill Lambert (BL) the Kennel Club (KC) joined the first part of the meeting. He was responding on behalf of the KC to the letter written to the KC and British Veterinary Association (BVA) from the committee.

BL assured the meeting that the Kennel Club shared all of the committee's concerns and have held a number of meetings and discussions with the BVA to discuss potential solutions. Whereas it was clear that the backlog that has been created is as a direct result of the pandemic it had also led the KC to question the service delivery that was able to be provided within the current system.

As explained in the committee's letter BL reiterated that the current delays to service delivery and the backlog that resulted occurred as a result of the closure of the BVA's premises, and by the requirement for scrutineers to have access to be able to score X-Rays. Following the first lockdown on 23rd March, government and BVA guidance to veterinary surgeons was that emergency treatment only should be offered, which did not include X-Ray screening. Despite this, when the BVA reopened their doors, they faced a huge number of X-rays which had been produced for scoring which had been carried out during lockdown.

Following a meeting between the Kennel Club and the BVA, the BVA have committed to the following detailed plan to reduce the backlog, and a return to normal working ASAP. This plan includes;

- Keeping the BVA premises open during the current lockdown.
- Increasing the number of scoring sessions
- Increasing the number of X-rays scored at each scoring session.
- Expanding the staff team to assist with workloads
- Increasing the number of available Scrutineers

It is estimated that this plan will enable a return to normal turnaround by March 2021.

In parallel to the above, BVA have renewed their commitment to continuing to develop an online scoring system, alleviating the need for scrutineers to travel into London and to be physically present to assess X-rays. This system is already under trial and whilst it has produced challenges there is a commitment to making this work. It was noted that the KC had provided investment for this some time back. The target date for this being up and running fully was the end of 2021.

EG asked whether there would be more scrutineers recruited and this was confirmed. The meeting felt that communication from both the KC and BVA had been poor and that more of this information should have been disseminated and that both organisations should have given more advice to assist breeders. The meeting members were concerned regarding the fact that people were now using the Australian ANKC scheme and that this data would be lost to the breed data unless it was sent in by owners and recorded by the KC. The meeting questioned the wisdom of not recording this data on the health section of the KC website. The meeting suggested that where there were records provided by both the ANKC and the BVA these should be used in a study to determine whether any differences between the scheme were of limited significance and could therefore be used fairly within KC records including the web site. There were already a number of comparisons within the public domain. There was an argument to suggest that less scorers as is the situation with the ANLKC scheme could lead to as much consistency as the current BVA scheme where more scorers are used but using also a second opinion.

The meeting wanted to see health results restored to registration documents especially given the current situation and the lack of ease at going over health results with buyers using a web site along. The meeting was concerned about the lack of data from these records being fed into the Estimated Breeding Values (EBVs). There were also concerns regarding the accuracy of the EBVs especially for Elbows due to glitches in the KCs new web site. BL confirmed that the KC were trying to address this and that Feline Soft were on target to resolve the issue by 8th February 21. BL stated that the EBVs were normally 40% more accurate than using an individual dog's scores alone but recognised the individual scores are required to ensure accuracy. The meeting was concerned with owners or breeders promoting breeding animals using EBVs alone which some are doing. Currently, dog's without a score are recorded as zero in future only dog's with a score will be used in the data set for EBVs. The replacement for Tom Lewis at the KC was Joanne Ilska and it may be appropriate for the committee to have another conversation with her at a later date and particularly in relation to the number of generations used in the data.

The meeting asked. How the KC and BVA envisaged ensuring that breeders did not remain with the cheaper alternatives even once the system was functioning fully again. The meeting reiterated their earlier suggestions regarding inducements/encouragement for people to compulsory submit all X Rays and also for some sort of incentive for them to continue with having X Rays already at the BVA scored rather than cancelling this once they were in receipt of the ANKC results. The meeting suggested these should really now be scored free of charge. BL committed to following this up with the BVA.

(subsequently the meeting has been informed that since the meeting BL has met again with the BVA to discuss proposals along the lines of those that suggested at the meeting to offer some sort of compensation to customers who have been affected by significant delay, and also those who have been forced to use alternatives to the KC BVA scheme. He hopes to be able to update the committee on this fairly shortly).

Other points discussed were:

That the KC were to have an independent enquiry into the launch of the new web site. They will also be revisiting the approach previously made by Roslin University into the use of Artificial Intelligence and scoring.

The situation of not having health results for foreign dog's on the KC site. In this day and age it should at least be possible for the KC to provide links to sites where health information could be obtained for such dogs.

The ongoing situation in relation to the KC/BVA eye examination scheme and limited panellists. The meeting were updated that opening up the panel to those holding certificates rather than diploma's and working alongside an experienced panellist initially was being discussed. The money the KC had previously invested was also to cover the eye schemes going electronic.

JVR thanked BL very much for attending and updating the meeting.

The meeting then considered how to move forward and the following actions were agreed.

A statement would be put together to inform people of our actions and posted as widely as possible. KS to draft and circulate (ACTION achieved) once agreed to go onto social media (ACTION achieved) Fiona Braddon to put on the Breed Council Web site.

An email to be set to BL clarifying what actions the meeting believe he is now going to take and that we will keep in touch for updates on progress.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm