



## APGOCATS Summer meeting – 19 June 2018, 10am – 11.30am Room N, Portcullis House

### Attendees:

- Steve Reed MP (Co-Chair)
- Lord Black of Brentwood
- David Drew MP
- Patricia Gibson MP
- Kevin Foster MP
- DEFRA Minister Lord Gardiner of Kimble
- Adam Diep, DEFRA
- Claire Bessant, International Cat Care
- Helena Cotton, BVA
- Richard Clare, Cats Protection
- Jacqui Cuff, Cats Protection
- Madison Rogers, Cats Protection
- Mike Webb, Battersea
- Scott Fryer, Battersea
- Ellen Buckerfield, Battersea
- Anna Wade, Blue Cross
- Steve Crow, Governing Council of the Cat Fancy

### Discussion:

1. Welcome from Chair – Steve Reed MP
2. Round up of previous meeting
3. Update on website and issues around GDPR –
  - The website for APGOCATS is currently under construction
  - to contact the group please use the newly created email: [info@apgocats.org.uk](mailto:info@apgocats.org.uk)
4. Issues for future business
  - Air gun attacks on cats –
    - o The group expressed support for the introduction of air gun licensing in England and Wales, so that cats have the same protections across the whole of the UK. Air guns are already licensed in Northern Ireland and Scotland
    - o the group is still awaiting for the next steps from the Home Office who are conducting a review into air weapons
  - Animal cruelty sentencing –
    - o the Government is committed to increasing the maximum sentence for animal cruelty and is awaiting parliamentary time to bring forward a bill
  - Breeding and sale of cats –
    - o The recently created Kitten Checklist was discussed and the group will promote this to the public and seek endorsement from the Government
    - o Kittens should not be sold in high street pet shops Potential full consultation on third party sales of puppies and kittens is imminent
  - Microchipping and neutering – Discussion points
    - o Keepers not updating their cats' microchip details on the databases

- The principle of ‘Seven stray days’ which is used for dogs doesn’t apply to cats. Instead, rescue centres keep cats for a reasonable time allowing owners to come forward. If compulsory microchipping of owned cats was introduced cats could be rehomed quicker as rescue centres would be better able to identify stray cats
- Need other identifiers for feral cats, no microchipping
- There needs to be education to dispel the myth that there are significant health risks of microchipping as health risks are minimal and rare
- Rented accommodation –
  - Cats Protection have surveyed private landlords, private tenants, social landlords and social tenants in a UK wide survey with YouGov, they will be launching their Purrfect Landlord campaign in the Autumn which aims to encourage landlords to allow cats and have responsible and reasonable pet policies. This includes ensuring there is a limit on the number of cats allowed per property and requiring cats to be neutered, microchipped and vaccinated. This will be launched in the autumn
  - Landlords say they are worried about damage, or fleas but few landlords who allow cats have experienced these issues
- Breeds with extreme characteristics –
  - The Canine and Feline Sector Group (CSFG) are looking at a voluntary code of practice for cat breeding
    - APGOCATS want to tackle the breeding of cats with extreme conformations or genetic defects that can lead to health or behavioural problems (e.g. the Scottish fold) – though 90% of cats aren’t pedigree, there are growing trends for people to own cats with extreme conformations or genetic defects due to celebrity ownership of these types of cats
    - Breeders are often hobbyists, and it can be hard to prove intent to breed extreme conformations or genetic defects
    - It can be hard to legislate against extreme conformations or genetic defects that cause welfare issues for cats
  - The group considered a probing amendment in the Animal Welfare Sentencing Bill around the committing of a welfare offence if the extreme breed Scottish Fold is bred

#### Loneliness as future focus for APGOCATS

- Discussion that this was timely given the work of the Jo Cox Foundation and the APPG on Loneliness. The group were keen to make contact with Tracey Crouch MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport and Civil Society
- Blue Cross have collated existing research on the benefits of having companion animals
- Agreement that APGOCATS would write to DEFRA to formally introduce itself and the key issues it plans to address

#### 5. Speech from the DEFRA Minister, Lord Gardiner of Kimble

The Government has taken a number of steps regarding animal welfare, such as:

- Animal welfare licensing – introducing statutory minimum standards, and incentivise higher standards, coming into force on 1 October – developed with CFSG
- Five year maximum sentences for animal cruelty – had the draft Bill in December, now looking at when it can be introduced in Parliament (also committed to recognising animal sentience)
- Defra is investing £14m into research on animal welfare concerns (e.g. the risk of fox rabies to cats)
- Code of practice for cats – designed with contemporary vet opinion
- Evidence call on 8<sup>th</sup> Feb on third party sales of puppies and kittens
- The consultation on e-collars has closed – the response will be published as soon as possible, but they received a large number of responses
- Air weapons – the Home Office are analysing responses to the consultation

#### 6. Questions to the Minister:

- When the new maximum sentences for animal cruelty are implemented, what plans are there for a public information campaign, to ensure that the sentences are an effective deterrent?
  - o There will undoubtedly be considerable thought given to communication with the public when these matters reach Parliament
- Is there a timeline and place for the Animal Welfare Bill?
  - o The Minister cannot say when it will happen, but DEFRA is ready and want to advance it as soon as possible – Steve Reed MP suggested that this is something that the APPG could lobby on
- How can we tackle extreme confirmations and generic defects?
  - o Need to look at the breeders and the buyers, perhaps charities can work with the breeders, or vets can speak to owners
- Is legislation on issues such as breeding out of the question?
  - o Although a culture shift is needed, legislation can be what moves culture in the right direction (e.g. seatbelts)
  - o Flexibility on thinking is important, DEFRA won't rule out the need for further legislation but currently don't see the need at this time

#### 7. Actions and Next meeting:

- a date will be set in the Autumn for the next meeting
- the meeting theme will focus on how cats can help on issue of loneliness
- APGOCATS will approach Tracey Crouch MP with regards to the Autumn meeting and potential investigation into loneliness
- the chair and co-chair will write formally to DEFRA on behalf of APGOCATS re the group's ongoing priorities
- APGOCATS to consider probing amendments to the Animal Welfare Bill re sentencing for breeding extreme breed characteristics
- all enquires to [info@apgocats.org.uk](mailto:info@apgocats.org.uk)

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