



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

David Rutley MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
for Food and Animal Welfare

T 03459 335577
defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/defra

Neil Parish
Chairman of the Committee
Environment, Food & Rural Affairs Committee
Committee Office
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

30 January 2019

Dear Neil,

Greyhound Welfare

Thank you for your letter of 23 January 2019 requesting a written update on progress made since your 2016 report on Greyhound Welfare. I have endeavoured to address the questions in your letter, as set out below.

“1. The Committee was concerned about the industry not publishing injury statistics. Interim injury / retirement data was published for 2017 – when will final statistics be published and what is the Government doing to ensure timely publication?”

As agreed with Defra, in March 2018 the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) published final injury statistics for 2017 and interim retirement statistics for 2017. Unlike injury data, retirement data necessarily takes longer to collect. For example, a final decision by a trainer to retire a dog from racing may be taken over a period of time. Following publication in March 2018 of interim retirement figures the final GBGB retirement statistics for 2017 were published in January 2019 (<http://www.gbgb.org.uk/Injury%20and%20Retirement%20Data.aspx>). In future, and with the agreement of Defra, GBGB will publish both final injury and final retirement statistics for the preceding year every June. Defra officials are in regular contact with GBGB to ensure this happens.

“2. The Committee recommended that Defra consider extending the 2010 Regulations to cover trainers’ kennels and that common welfare standards, verified by an independent body, be developed for all kennels. We would be grateful for an update on this matter.”

An agreed independent welfare standard for trainers’ kennels has been developed and published. The BSI Publicly Available Specification, *PAS 251:17: Specification for Trainers’ Kennels*, was published in December 2017 (<https://shop.bsigroup.com/ProductDetail?pid=00000000030351513>). The development of these new standards was sponsored by GBGB and involved a number of welfare groups, including the Dogs Trust and the RSPCA. As agreed with Defra, GBGB are currently in the process of obtaining United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) accreditation as an

enforcement body for standards at GBGB licensed trainers' kennels. Subject to approval by UKAS this should be in place by summer 2019. This will ensure that there is an enforced welfare standard in place for all GBGB trainers' kennels.

Defra explained in our review of the 2010 Regulations, which was published in September 2016, that at the time we had not seen sufficient evidence of problems at trainers' kennels not regulated by the GBGB i.e. at trainers' kennels related to the three remaining independent 'amateur' greyhound tracks in England. In this review we said that further evidence would be required before we could consider extending the 2010 Regulations to trainers' kennels. This would include evidence on the precise number of trainers operating solely at independent tracks in England and evidence on the welfare conditions at their kennels. Defra research on the number of trainers operating on independent tracks was published in August 2018. The Dogs Trust and the RSPCA have subsequently funded research by the University of Bristol into the conditions at these kennels. That research is due to be presented to Defra in February 2019.

Once Defra has considered the research on independent trainers' kennels and has assessed the progress by GBGB in relation to its own trainers' kennels, we will then be in a position to consider whether the 2010 Regulations should be extended to include trainers' kennels.

“3. DCMS recently announced that operators will contribute 0.6% of their online turnover from bets placed on British greyhound racing (amounting to £3m) with effect from 1st January 2019. Does the Government consider this to be a fair contribution?”

On 10th January 2019, the Government announced a new funding commitment from bookmakers worth an estimated £3m this year to ensure the welfare of greyhounds is protected and improved. This additional yearly funding commitment will increase the total amount of funding from bookmakers to the British Greyhound Racing Fund (BGRF) to an estimated £10m this year.

This commitment will significantly improve the welfare of thousands of greyhounds by funding kennel upgrades across the country both on and off-track. It will provide further support for injured greyhounds through funding for the Greyhound Board of Great Britain's Injury Recovery Scheme and in supporting the Greyhound Trust, which looks to find homes for retired greyhounds, ensuring that wherever possible they go on to enjoy a full and active life in retirement.

While this is a positive step which ensures that many of the largest bookmakers now contribute to the BGRF, the Government will continue to monitor the level of contributions closely. We will continue discussions with the bookmaking industry to encourage all remaining bookmakers who take bets on greyhound racing, and do not currently contribute, to commence payments to the BGRF to support the sport.

While the BGRF plays an important role in supporting and developing greyhound racing and ensuring there is an adequate funding provision for welfare and integrity, it is one of many sources of income to the sport. Commercial agreements between the betting and greyhound racing sectors are worth in excess of £30m each year. The Minister for Sport will be meeting with the Greyhound Board of Great Britain (GBGB) and the Greyhound Forum to discuss current funding and how it can be used to further improve greyhound welfare.

“4. The Committee recommended a probationary period of two years of self-regulation to allow the industry to respond to our proposals. Does the Government consider that, since our report in February 2016, the industry has improved greyhound welfare sufficiently for legislation not to be required?”

The Government has not ruled out further legislation, indeed, Defra’s review of the 2010 Regulations stated that it would consider a number of improvements to the Regulations in areas supported by both welfare groups and the industry. The Government has welcomed the progress made to date by the GBGB in relation to the agreements it gave to Defra, both on the publication of injury and retirement statistics and on improving conditions at trainers’ kennels. Furthermore, the Government has welcomed GBGB’s ‘Greyhound Commitment’ which goes beyond what the Government has asked of GBGB. In particular we have welcomed the GBGB’s five year plan to reduce to zero the number of dogs put to sleep after racing because veterinary costs would be too high or no homes could be found. This is exactly the kind of proactive work we would expect of a modern self-regulatory body. As explained above, the need for further changes to the Regulations will be considered in light of ongoing continued progress against the recommendations set out in Defra’s 2016 review and the forthcoming research on trainers’ kennels.

With best wishes,



DAVID RUTLEY MP