

## **Our actions for pedigree dog welfare**

Here are just some of the important actions that we have taken for pedigree dog welfare since the BBC documentary Pedigree Dogs Exposed (PDE) aired in 2008.

### **Working together**

We have been working with other key organisations to discuss the welfare issues associated with dog breeding and to take forward possible solutions. This includes participating in two stakeholder groups that were set up after PDE for this purpose. Other organisations in the groups included the Kennel Club, Dogs Trust, Blue Cross, PDSA, British Veterinary Association Animal Welfare Foundation (BVA AWF) and the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

### **The first to pull out of Crufts**

The RSPCA decided not to attend Crufts 2009 to send a clear message that urgent action must be taken to improve pedigree dog health and welfare. We believe that from a health and welfare point of view 'beauty pageant' dog shows that use current Kennel Club 'Breed Standards' as the main judging criteria are fundamentally flawed.

Several other leading animal welfare charities and show sponsors followed suit and the BBC decided not to broadcast the show. We have not attended Crufts since 2008.

### **Independent scientific report**

In order to make a constructive contribution towards identifying practical ways forward to improve pedigree dog welfare, we commissioned an independent scientific report on pedigree dog breeding. The findings and conclusions of this report- **Pedigree dog breeding in the UK: a major welfare concern?** - informed the RSPCA's position on this serious issue.

### **New research into inherited diseases**

The authors of the RSPCA commissioned report as well as those of two other reports on dog breeding identified the urgent need for systematic collection of data on inherited diseases. In fact, this was considered to be the most urgent recommendation by the authors of the RSPCA commissioned report.

We are working with the Royal Veterinary College and the University of Sydney on a three-year PhD research project to develop a new system for data collection, analysis and interpretation. It is not just dogs that are affected by welfare issues from selective breeding so the PhD study aims to estimate the prevalence of inherited and acquired disorders in both dogs and cats to highlight breeds at greatest risk of specific conditions.

More information is available on the VetCompass project website: [www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCOMPASS](http://www.rvc.ac.uk/VetCOMPASS).

## **Get Puppy Smart Campaign**

The three reports on dog breeding all concluded that there was an urgent need to provide potential puppy buyers with expert, evidence-based information on how to choose a puppy. We therefore commissioned the University of Bristol to write a 10 step guide to choosing a puppy. This covers key points that potential puppy buyers should consider from the moment they consider buying a puppy, through to choosing a happy, healthy puppy to take home.

The information has been used to underpin our Get Puppy Smart campaign ([www.getpuppysmart.com](http://www.getpuppysmart.com)) which launched in 2011. The campaign aims to provide potential owners with the information they need to make properly informed decisions when choosing a happy, healthy puppy. It also aims to change the behaviour of buyers from making decisions based only on appearance to prioritising behaviour, health and welfare instead.

## **Puppy Contract**

The concept of a puppy sales contract was also identified as a key action to improve dog welfare. We have therefore worked with the BVA AWF to develop documentation that will empower puppy buyers to make properly informed decisions when buying a puppy and help them avoid the problems that can arise from buying a puppy from an irresponsible breeder. For breeders and sellers the contract is a record of the thought and attention they have devoted to their puppies' breeding and care.

The puppy contract was launched in April 2012 and can be downloaded from the puppy contract website: [puppycontract.rspca.org.uk/home](http://puppycontract.rspca.org.uk/home).

## **Independent Advisory Council**

The urgent need for an independent Advisory Council to provide advice on the welfare issues associated with dog breeding was also identified by all three reports. We worked with other organisations to take this forward and the

Advisory Council on the Welfare Issues of Dog Breeding was established in 2010. The RSPCA is a Patron of the Council.

The Council has produced a Standard for Breeding Dogs which is a recommendation of the minimum standards which must be met to provide high standards of health and welfare for all dogs involved in breeding. The standard applies to all types of dogs and breeders.

The Advisory Council Standard for Breeding Dogs is available to download from their website: [www.dogadvisorycouncil.com](http://www.dogadvisorycouncil.com).

### **Humane Society United States (HSUS) conference**

The RSPCA co-sponsored a two day HSUS hosted conference in 2011 on dog genetics, health and behaviour. Further information is available on the conference website: [www.humanesociety.org.uk](http://www.humanesociety.org.uk).