



Health and Breeding Advisory Group

Terms of Reference

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1. Purpose, connection to strategy and scope

The Health and Breeding Advisory Group (“the Group”) provides advice on policies, activities, and operations where dog health or welfare is affected and provides oversight for the promotion of dog health.

It supports all the Royal Kennel Club (‘RKC’) strategic objectives and specifically those to:

- a. Champion the wellbeing of dogs
- b. Safeguard and enhance the future of pedigree dogs, addressing breed-related health issues

2. Key Activities and Responsibilities

The Group is tasked with oversight of all the elements of the RKC’s approach to developing, implementing, and monitoring canine Health and Welfare policies. It is responsible for providing advice and evidence-based guidance on dog health policies. It provides advice to the relevant Committees including the Business Committee on dog health related activities and operations. It is responsible for the promotion of dog health across the organisation. Its remit includes:

- a. Breed Standards and Conformation
- b. Genetics and Research
- c. Canine Sports Science
- d. Canine Clinical and Veterinary Science
- e. Canine Welfare and husbandry
- f. Canine Breeding
- g. Legislation and Regulation

3. Delegated authority from Board

It has delegated authority from the Board to oversee, coordinate, review and assess the effectiveness of the RKC’s approach to dog health. This includes monitoring the delivery of annual health plans and decisions on research, education, and communications.

Matters reserved for the Board are defined as those which could materially impact the reputation of the RKC.

4. Composition

The Group shall consist of Directors, Volunteers and RKC staff. It will comprise a minimum of 6 and maximum of 10 people and shall aim for a diverse range of skills, experience, and perspectives among its members.

Additional RKC staff will be provided to support and administer the work of the Group and who may attend meetings as required and as requested by the Group’s Chair. They may speak at meetings but will not be members or vote.

5. Committee Chair role

The Group shall elect a Chair and Vice-Chair from among its members, to serve for a 3-year term. The election of the Chair and Vice-Chair will take place at the first meeting of the Group following the RKC AGM in the appropriate year.

The Chair is responsible for effectively managing the activities of the Group, to deliver against the strategic aims the Board has delegated in achieving its purpose.

Behaviours and competencies required by the Chair are:

- a. Chairing meetings of the Group
- b. Ensuring the Group works effectively and fulfils its Terms of Reference
- c. Setting and managing the Group's agenda
- d. Providing support and advice to the Board, helping to implement the policies and strategic direction agreed by the Board
- e. Setting the style and tone of Group meetings to promote a culture of integrity and respect, a collegiate atmosphere and high-level debate
- f. Generating constructive relationships to listen to concerns and maintain support
- g. Navigate politically sensitive situations
- h. Uphold the highest standards of integrity and probity
- i. Ensure the voices of everyone in the meetings are heard and respected, including the staff who support its activities

6. Group appointment process

All Directors and Volunteers shall serve for 3-year terms, and they will be appointed by the Board.

RKC Staff members will be appointed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chief Canine Wellbeing and Engagement Officer and the current Chair and Vice-Chair of the group.

7. Group member role

The role of the Group members (Directors, Volunteers & Staff) is to:

- a. Support the Chair to ensure the Group works effectively and fulfils its Terms of Reference
- b. Provide expertise and opinion on all matters pertaining to the Group
- c. Provide support and advice to the Group, helping it to implement the policies and strategic direction agreed by the Board
- d. Contribute to a culture of integrity and respect, a collegiate atmosphere and high-level debate
- e. Generate constructive relationships to listen to concerns and maintain support
- f. Navigate politically sensitive situations
- g. Uphold the highest standards of integrity and probity
- h. Ensure the voices of everyone in meetings are heard and respected, including the staff who support its activities

8. Ability to scale up and down as needed

The Group may second others (Directors, Volunteers, Staff) on a time-limited basis, in a non-voting capacity, to provide additional expertise, as required.

9. Meeting frequency

The Group will meet a minimum of 3 times per year, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Meetings may be conducted in person, virtually, or a combination of both. A quorum shall be achieved with the presence of at least 50% of the Group's members and this must include both volunteers and staff.

10. Reporting and accountability

The Group shall submit a summary report of its findings, decisions, and recommendations to the RKC Board of Directors regularly (usually at the next planned Board meeting). A designated Group member shall present updates during Board meetings.

Members of the Group shall maintain the confidentiality of sensitive information discussed during meetings.

11. Decision-making process

The Group will strive to make decisions by consensus. On occasions where it is necessary to have a vote, a simple majority will be required to carry a motion. In the case of equal votes for and against a motion, the Chair shall have a casting vote.

12. Resourcing process

The Group shall not have a budget for its own use. It shall have secretarial/administrative support from a member (or members) of RKC staff, at the discretion of the Chief Canine Wellbeing and Engagement Officer.

Time commitment of non-staff members: Meetings are likely to run for 2.5 to 3 hours (3 times a year). Members will be expected to prepare for meetings (reading/preparing papers) and may be required to carry out delegated actions between meetings. There is likely to be time required for updating conversations/emails between meetings. A total time commitment of 3-6 days per year is estimated. The Chair and Vice-Chair are likely to have to commit additional time, for example to maintain a regular dialogue with the Chief Executive and RKC Chair.

13. Handoffs with other committees – key points for consultation, involvement, or communication of information

The Group has an External Health Reference Group formed of subject matter experts, who may be called upon for consideration of specific areas as part of a Task & Finish group.

Key activities and responsibilities of these sub-groups is shown in [Appendix 1](#).

The proposed initial membership of all groups is shown in [Appendix 2](#).

14. Definition of Group name

The Group shall not be a committee formally established in the Rules of the Royal Kennel Club. It will report and be accountable to the RKC Board of Directors.

Appendix 1: Sub-group roles and responsibilities

External Health Reference Group:

The purpose of the External Health Reference group ('EHRG') is to provide a panel of relevant experts who can inform the development of health and welfare policy for the RKC. Members of the EHRG will be appointed by invitation from the Health & Breeding Advisory Group. It will include subject matter experts across the following disciplines:

- a. Genetics and research
- b. Clinical and veterinary science and practice
- c. Canine sports science
- d. Canine welfare legislation
- e. Dog breeding, husbandry and welfare
- f. Human behaviour change

The above list is not exhaustive, and other experts may be added, as needed.

Given the diverse range of expertise, it is unlikely that the EHRG will meet as a single group. It is expected that thematic sub-groups would meet (in person or virtually) to address specific topics and needs. Meetings will be convened, as needed, by the Chair of the Health & Breeding Advisory group. It is not expected that the Chair of the Health & Breeding Advisory group would necessarily attend every sub-group meeting. Thematic sub-groups may elect their own Chair to ensure the effective management of their meetings.

Appendix 2: Proposed Health Governance Membership

| HEALTH & BREEDING ADVISORY GROUP | EXTERNAL HEALTH REFERENCE GROUP | |
|--|--|---|
| CHAIR: Dr N Blayney | | |
| Dr N Blayney Dr R James Miss C McNamara Mr F Kane Mr H Heathcote Mr I Seath Prof M Herrtage Prof S Crispin Dr A Schemel Mrs H Fox | BSAVA representative BVA President GENETICS & RESEARCH: Prof B Ollier Prof G England Prof S Dean Dr C Mellersh Dr J Ilska CANINE SPORTS SCIENCE EXPERTISE: Dr A Wills Dr C Gomez Alvarez Dr G Doyle Dr J Boyd HUMAN BEHAVIOUR CHANGE: Prof D Mills Ms S Rogers Ms J White | CLINICAL EXPERTISE: Dr J Davies - musculoskeletal Dr D Fisher- cardiology Prof D Brodbelt – epidemiology/veterinary Prof M Herrtage- neurology + multiple Dr A Skipper - veterinary/epidemiology Prof S Crispin- ophthalmology Mr P McPherson – ophthalmology Dr J Ladlow – surgery/BOAS Dr M Lowry - veterinary/neurology Prof P Freeman – veterinary/neurology LEGISLATIVE/BREEDING EXPERTISE: Ms S Edwards Mrs G Simpson Mr J Barney |