

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Animal Health and Welfare Committee
TAB Building 106-110 Jackson Street, Petone - Google Meet
Wednesday 26 June 2024 10am**

Present: Allen Bryce, Chair (AB)
Sally Cory, NZVA (SC) (via videoconferencing)

In Attendance: Edward Rennell, (ER) CE GRNZ
Michelle Ledger (ML) Welfare Manager GRNZ (videoconferencing)
Nick Ydgren RIB, Observer (NY) (videoconferencing)
Darrin Williams, GRNZ (DW)
Peter Mason, NAWAC Observer (Peter M) (videoconferencing)
Bill Wilson, GRNZ Track Manager (BW) (videoconferencing)
Michael Dore, Racing Manager (MD)

Apologies: Kat Littlewood, Vet and Massey Lecturer (KL)
Philip Morrison, Vet (PM)
Paula Lemow, NAWAC (PL) Observer
Dave Matheson, Vet (DM) (via videoconferencing) due to technical issues

Minutes: Chantelle Askew, AHCW Secretary (CA)

Declarations of Interest

Noted no changes to the members' declarations of interest as set out below:

Allen Bryce	Retired government veterinarian undertaking occasional consultancy work.
Philip Morrison	Full-time vet working mostly with large animals On-track veterinarian most Thursdays at Cambridge, and occasionally at Auckland Has clients who are greyhound owners and trainers, but does not own greyhounds personally
Kat Littlewood	Veterinarian + FANZCVS Animal Welfare Science Lecturer at Massey University in undergraduate and postgraduate animal welfare, behaviour, ethics, and law Employs the Five Domains Model as a framework for animal welfare assessment and training EFAB Committee of NZVA
Dave Matheson	Retired vet (greyhounds – exams, treatments, surgery and reproduction) Involvement with greyhounds for 45 years Worked on greyhound tracks in Australia, England and America
Paula Lemow	Senior Advisor Animal Welfare Science MPI Vet Nurse
Anna Palmer	Racing Integrity Board Head of Animal Welfare Operations Former PhD candidate at Massey University; research was funded by GRNZ.
Peter Mason	NAWAC, observer
Sally Cory	Head of NZVA Veterinary Services Companion Animals Emergency Vet and Manager of Emergency Vet Clinic in Wellington

Edward Rennell	Currently involved with GAP GRNZ Chief Executive Former CE Harness Racing New Zealand Former TAB Broadcasting and Operations
Michelle Ledger	GRNZ Welfare Manager

Welcome

The full meeting commenced at 10.06am with the Chair welcoming everyone.

Minutes of Previous AHC Meeting

The minutes of the AHC Meeting held on 24 April 2024 were taken as **read** and confirmed as a **true** and **correct** record of the meeting.

Action Register

The Committee **noted** the status of the Actions.

Action list to be reviewed and actions that are completed to be removed.

1. Chair's Report

AB said it has been an interesting couple of months. There was discussion around the Minister announcing that he did not expect to make a decision this year. Steve Ables (Greens) quizzed him about greyhound welfare in Parliament's Scrutiny Week; GRNZ has offered Steve a briefing and AB has offered to get involved and possibly show him what happens in the industry.

Eliot Forbes is the new CEO for the RIB, some concern as the RIB has changed the status of GRNZ's work on rules, saying they are 'slow' which will be covered in the CE report. Regional workshops have been held, AB asked whether AHC observers and members might be invited to attend these in future - ER indicated yes.

ML presented to the NZVA conference. SC met up with ML at the conference but unfortunately did not make it to the presentation.

USA Adoption Program for retired dogs is well underway. Started off with some minor issues that were managed, but there is the possibility of rocky waters ahead with Qantas who have been spooked by issues in regards to the NSW greyhound industry.

The GRNZ Board has requested advice from this committee for post vaccination racing.

Peter M raised in relation to NAWAC that the only information NAWAC members are getting is what is in the press; it would be good if GRNZ could make an effort to put across more firmly GRNZ's views and get them through to NAWAC rather than NAWAC just seeing the headlines that are in the media. Discussion around NAWAC not reliably receiving the Quarterly report officially. ER agreed to circulate the Quarterly Reports to AHC and are happy for this to be passed onto NAWAC.

Action: Put NAWAC on the circulation for media releases, quarterly report etc.

Peter M suggested meeting with ER and AB to discuss this. AB asked would it be appropriate for ER for example to come along to a NAWAC meeting, Peter M explained currently time is short, in terms of putting time aside as focus is on producing Codes. Could ask the chair perhaps to meet rather than the entire committee. ER is happy to meet with anyone at any time.

Action: Peter M to see if a meeting can be arranged to improve communication between NAWAC, GRNZ and AHCW.

AB explained that GRNZ is trying to get another meeting with SPCA but GRNZ have not had a formal response to their requests. GRNZ and AB are happy to meet with SPCA.

2. GRNZ Chief Executive Report

Operational Report to June GRNZ Board Meeting

The Operational Report was taken as read. ER explained that May was disappointing with two dogs euthanised at Addington following a racing incident on May 16, then one dog dying suddenly post-race at Wanganui on May 17 and one at Addington on May 30. Both of the sudden deaths have been referred for autopsies with results still awaited. Currently sitting at 9 euthanasias in the current season, last season 7. The uncertainty in the industry affects morale - participants do not know if the industry has a future. GRNZ will keep encouraging the Minister that a decision is needed, and that greyhound welfare is adversely affected by the uncertainty.

KPIs - 31 May 2024

Injury rate was better but still room for improvement. Just under benchmark but would like to have it lower. CAT F 2.99 which is higher than where we need to be and want to be. Some comfort seeing GWIC's stats sitting at 4.7. Our rates are better but we still must explore any way we can to reduce them. Certainly ongoing focus with BW, ML and MD on where we can reduce injuries where we can.

RIB Focus Areas

RIB's quarterly report has been submitted. We are finalising ours which will go to the minister this week. RIB reassessed 15 focus areas, 10 are now assessed as good. Two areas of concern that we have been advised of are the downgrading of progress on Rules to 'Slow' and also comment around our injury statistics. ER said he believes it is completely inappropriate as assessing on welfare standards.

Peter M asked where was the race with the 2 dogs euthanised, ER confirmed Addington, 5:20 race not PBD and 6 dog race. MD will provide more information on this. The meeting was subsequently abandoned.

Vaccination - Racing

The Board has asked that the AHCW to consider Rule 25(6) and the appropriate stand-down period for dogs racing following vaccination. Rule 25 (6) states:

Unless GRNZ determines otherwise, a greyhound must not compete in any Event within five days of the date it was administered a vaccine.

General comment was 5 days was still appropriate. PM has done some research and would like to discuss.

One other issue ER touched base on was the issues in NSW. Media 3-4 weeks ago where there were two rehoming sites, decided to shut one and use that site as a processing area for dogs being sent to America. Over the past year they have significantly increased the number of dogs they have exported. A lot of staff were allegedly immediately terminated, this generated negative publicity around the rehoming process including NSW's American project. In addition, one dog died during transit from NSW to the USA, and the former GRNSW Chief Veterinary Officer Alex Brittain submitted a handover report on his departure from GRNSW which was highly critical of their

practices and procedures and was briefly publicly released . Due to the media negativity, Qantas who was doing their exports, reviewed their decision and advised they would not confirm any new bookings until they reviewed this decision. We have bookings in July and hope this still goes ahead. What we are doing with JetPets is different to what NSW is doing. GRNZ has provided a lot of information to Qantas about the steps we take to ensure the welfare of greyhounds during transport, effectively Greyhound Racing Victoria does the same as us. Although not related, poor press around NSW operations will impact negatively on New Zealand's rehoming program, as Qantas perceives a risk for their brand to be involved. GRNZ is equally trying to distance itself from the bad publicity in NSW.

Peter M asked about what happens to the dogs when they reach America. DW explained we know exactly where they are, each dog from each shipment. Last 14 dogs who went to America, 8 in homes, 4 pending adoptees, 1 foster and 1 still with the agency. ER explained the public Facebook page that has been set up sharing stories and photos. Feedback is really positive. Key aim for the American project is to get greyhounds into homes quicker from a welfare perspective. ER explained NSW had one greyhound die last week, going into Dallas, to date we have had no issue with dogs, all arrived in good condition. Feature for us is going straight to The Ark at JFK (<https://arkjfk.com>) where they are looked after and veterinary care is available. Key difference between us and Victoria v NSW is that we are meeting a demand that we already know is there, not sending dogs to live in shelter kennels. The USA program is secondary to our prime focus which is domestic and the primary focus for rehomed NZ greyhounds is still domestic.

3. GRNZ Welfare Manager

Operational Report - attached

The Operational Report was taken as read. Injury rates at Manawatu have decreased since the summer 'spike'. Since the refurbishment injury rates at Manakau have also decreased. Serious injuries continue to plague Addington, the remediation at Addington will hopefully address safety concerns.

ER spoke about the future of **surgical AI**. Recommendation that GA look to transition away from SI from 31 December 2025. Consulting each state body on this, GRNZ needs to go back to GA for their August meeting, our Board will need to consider its position at the 31 July Board meeting.

Action: CA Look to circulate GA paper, out of cycle discussion, absorb material and take this back to the Board. Over 90% of our pups are from surgical AI - circulate paper and arrange with the committee 30 mins - 60 mins meeting when suits to discuss before going back to the board. ML touched on this and explained the issues. AB suggested it would be best if there could be some consultation within the industry.

Update on New Policies and Consultation

Breeding exemption now in effect. Safe Return to Racing approved by the Board and will commence 1st August. Board approved other policies and are out for consultation with LPs. Blood banks would be impacted by the rehoming policy changes and are the subject of focussed consultation as well as NZVA consultation.

SIRC Activities

Age continues to be a significant risk, particularly for serious muscle injuries. Older dog races that cater specifically for these dogs once a week, thereby limiting racing frequency and also scheduling these as race one or two meaning they are not confined to a kennel for as long. ML went through the paper which was taken as read. Importance of Safe Return to Racing policy. Track to Trainer

influences. Survey of trainers being designed which will examine their access to certain training facilities. Looking to analyse this information to see if there are any correlations between higher or lower injury rates. Survey compiled and with SIRC.

RtR Report

RtR summary sheet for entries during 2023-2024 was taken as read. .

Essentially showing all greyhounds admitted via RtR, the type of surgery they are having, and the length of the rehabilitation to clearance, helps GRNZ track dogs from RtR and into rehoming. DW said the sheet was designed to show from the moment they came into RtR. This was in response to RIB asking where the RtR dogs were. Way of us tracking the dogs from their injuries to their adoption. Going forward will continue to populate, work out timings to repair a dog, time to adopt a dog, essential data.

Emerging Technologies in Injury Prevention

Draw attention to the use of artificial intelligence. The use of novel technology and AI can enhance our capacity to analyse gaits and predict injuries, and detect underlying injuries which may be a risk to the welfare of racing greyhounds. Technology shouldn't replace vets in diagnosis but should be used as an adjunct tool. The paper was discussed and noted as read.

Action: AB asked ML to address her Actions on the Action Register

4. Update on Track Management Programme

General update on track management programme - Operational Report attached

Update on Addington. General scope of works to be completed within 6 weeks. The Club last night made a decision since 600m starts on the other two tracks in NZ have been removed, the club has decided to remove the 600m start while these works are going on. When gone, manage the natural curvature of the track. A full report will be available at the end of the remedial works.

Wanganui, steady increase for the straight track. Number of races today is more than the previous. BW strongly believes it will be a cornerstone for the industry going forward. Ultimately having a straight track only meeting would be where we want to be. TAB has said we would need 10 races, this is the issue as we would need enough dogs for this.

Auckland, settling well. Still looking to recruit, issue with the lease and people not wanting to move jobs where there is no certainty for the current industry. We have indicated to the council we would like more certainty, the ball is in the council's court to come back to us. Council will be looking to exit the greyhound track in time. AB asked what would happen if there was no track in Manakau: would race twice a week at Cambridge, an obvious choice.

Cambridge business as usual.

Manawatu earmarked to have a similar replacement of track profile carried out. Historical discussion. Currently putting together scope of works.

Hatrick business as usual.

5. Racing Update

Injury Update

Operational report was discussed and taken as read. The population snapshot clearly displays GRNZ's two major population issues, the high Rehoming Count and the low Season Births Count. Ideally these two numbers would be reversed: 719 births and 458 Rehoming/Waiting List.

Injury Mitigation - Strategy on a page attached

The Plan on a Page shows what is coming through and what we can do to mitigate these. This report was discussed and read.

ER comments it is proactively trying to mitigate, using a working document, continually consider can it work or can it not. AB noted it was certainly good to have a document showing what was being done and what was being considered. NY acknowledged a great amount of work to be seen and suggested would be great for MD to bring along to their meetings. Peter M agreed it would be great to be shared with NAWAC. ML asked about straight track trials, was there a way of analysing the injury dataset re straight track in the datasets. MD said PBD is variable, will be yes, no or straight. PBD corner races should not have the benefit of straight PBD races. Discussion around how different the drag lure was to the rail lure.

Action: CA Send footage to the committee of straight track racing.

PBD vs Random Ignore Finish On Injuries

Initially designed to look at what injury rates are like for dogs after injuries. MD went through the report and the report was taken as read.

6. Rehoming and RtR Numbers / Outcomes Update

Rehoming Update - See Operational Report

DW went through the Rehoming Statistics. The Rehoming Operation report was taken as read.

The interview with RNZ was disappointing in that it only focused on the "backlog" of greyhounds being the sole reason for exporting them to America. Whilst interviewed at length about the positive aspects of the programme and GRNZ commitment to find all greyhounds homes, the article did not report on those aspects.

7. RIB Update

Audit outcomes

NY went through the Kennel Audits presentation with 185 audits, 126 LPs audited, 1046 improvement notices issues, average of 5.8 improvement notices per report with a total of 2884 greyhounds assessed. AB asked how the LPs were, NY said most of the LPs understand now why they are doing it. NY said it was worthwhile developing this further near to finishing the Audit model. ER asked if there was much attitude from participants around certainty to the industry's future. There was a little although more around breeding and whelping facilities. ER noted that these audits had not resulted in any notices in relation to the welfare standards. AB asked if there was any pressure from the new government for RIB to downsize. ER acknowledged that the RIB had been put under more pressure due to HRNZ having added 50 more races to the racing calendar meaning 50 more race days.

ML asked in the absence of Kat, is there a need for the RIB to incorporate positive welfare indicators in audits, thereby improving focus on aspects of positive welfare and allowing endorsement of welfare high performances such as a welfare champion, should be equally recognised. NY said definitely worth it.

Other RIB Issues

No other issues for the RIB to discuss.

ML asked about teeth grade 2 and 3, are there follow-ups on these treatments being done - NY replied yes all completed.

PM joined the meeting at 1.15pm due to technical difficulties. PM supports the rule of 5 days. Vaccinations - Racing. discussion and there is no science to indicate that 5 days is not appropriate.

8. General Business

ML stated as part of the workshop she attended, one of the workshops had a topic on preparing for large scale emergencies, where there are a large number of dogs. Given we have over 3000 dogs. Flag that as an opportunity to work with government agencies on emergency preparedness.

No other general business.

Close of meeting at 1.20pm

AB thanked Peter M agreeing to chair the next meeting.

Next Meeting: 4 September 2024.

Minutes approved:

Signed:

Date: