

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Animal Health and Welfare Committee
106-110 Jackson Street, Petone - Google Meet
Wednesday 04 September 2024 10.30am**

Present: Peter Mason, NAWAC Observer (Peter M) Acting Chair
Philip Morrison, Vet (PM)
Dave Matheson, Vet (DM)
Kat Littlewood, Vet and Massey Lecturer (KL) (via videoconferencing)
Michelle Ledger, Welfare Manager GRNZ (ML)

In Attendance: Edward Rennell, CE GRNZ (ER)
Nick Ydgren, RIB Observer (NY) (via videoconferencing)
Darrin Williams, GRNZ (DW)
Bill Wilson, GRNZ Track Manager (BW) (via videoconferencing)
Michael Dore, GRNZ Racing Manager (MD)
Gavin Goble, Observer (GG) (via videoconferencing)
Paula Lemow, NAWAC Observer (PL) (via videoconferencing)

Apologies: Allen Bryce, Chair (AB)
Sally Cory, NZVA (SC)

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
Peter Mason	NAWAC, observer
Sally Cory	Head of NZVA Veterinary Services Companion Animals Emergency Vet and Manager of Emergency Vet Clinic in Wellington Currently involved with GAP

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

Gavin Goble to declare any relevant interests at the next meeting.

Welcome

The full meeting commenced at 10.32 am with ER introducing Dr Gavin Goble, and acting Chair Peter M welcoming everyone. Gavin is to sit in as an interim observer, with his official appointment to the committee to be confirmed with AB on his return.

Minutes of Previous AHC Meeting

The minutes of the AHC Meeting held on 26 June 2024 were taken as **read** and confirmed as a **true** and **correct** record of the meeting. The out of cycle meeting minutes were also taken as **read** and confirmed.

Action Register

The Committee **noted** the status of the Actions. The list is to be reviewed and actions that are completed removed.

1. Chair's Report

Peter M advised the committee that AB's Chair Report had been circulated. Peter M confirmed the Chair of NAWAC would like to meet with AB and ER for a general catch up on progress towards addressing the RIB report recommendations.

In AB's Chair's report that was circulated he apologises for his non-participation in this meeting and thanked Peter M again for agreeing to chair the meeting. Welcome to Gavin Goble who will be moving back to NZ after working for Greyhound Racing Victoria in a similar position to ML's position with GRNZ.

There is hope that the Minister for Racing might officially open the new straight track in Wanganui, this may be an opportunity for him to announce the long-awaited government's decision on the future of the industry.

Action: CA to organise meeting between NAWAC Chair, Peter M, PL, ER, ML and AB.

2. GRNZ Chief Executive Report

Operational Report to July GRNZ Board Meeting

The GRNZ CE Report was taken as read. ER explained he would concentrate on what has happened since GRNZ's Annual Report has been finalised, KPI's are a mixed bag with injury rates down on benchmark 7% but up on the previous year which was 10% down on benchmark. MD, BW and ML meet regularly to discuss injuries to introduce mitigations. Rule change is being consulted on for the default Vacant Box. When there is a scratching and a seven dog field, historically has been Vacant Box 5, when MD did analysis of injury rates with different vacant box configurations, where we had seven dog fields and Box 1 was vacant, statistically this injury rate was significantly lower than any other box. This data was provided to UTS which confirmed this was statistically significant. Rule change provides flexibility in what GRNZ might determine to be the Vacant Box. Intention going forward where there are seven dog fields, Box 1 will be the default vacant box.

GRNZ has just completed re-licensing where LP's had to do online modules before being re-licensed. A few technical issues which we are reviewing for next season. This was a worthwhile

exercise, this year the program covered what the welfare standards require, further information on best practice socialisation and a reminder of our euthanasia policy. Peter M asked if we updated the module each year, ER confirmed yes.

Another key result has been with rehoming, where last season GRNZ had a record 673 dogs rehomed. Private rehomes are up which is a good thing, have also updated the LP declaration for private rehomes. The current structure is four adoption agencies, Nightrave, GAP, Mayhounds and Kiwikiwi, with GAP being the major body. GRNZ fund GAP, and we have introduced a risk based target for adoptions. If they adopt 90% of their target they get 90% funding, if they adopt 110% they get 110% of funding.

Qantas has confirmed the continuation of the American Adoption Program. We didn't export any dogs in August due to the heat in New York, looking to restart in September. Key message is that the export market is important but our primary focus is domestic.

No further update from the Government in regards to the review or the decision. Not ideal as it creates uncertainty, last contact from the Minister was that he would make a decision in his own time.

Finally, we did have an increase to 13 euthanasias on race day compared to 7 last season but still well down from 3 years ago when it was 60. We would like to keep this level as low as we can. ER explained that we are down across the codes, thoroughbreds had 21 last year and we had 13 yet you never hear about the thoroughbreds in the media. ER acknowledged the management team and all of their hard work. Peter M spoke about the good progress being made to reduce injuries, it may be that a point is reached where they can't actually get too much lower.

Wanganui straight track was introduced in July and going very well. Looking to renovate the Palmerston North track in October where it will shut down for 6 weeks and will transfer to the straight track and oval track in Wanganui. Intention is to race fortnightly on the straight track. Some concern about the track drying up, need to monitor this and perhaps have 12 races as opposed to 15, an area we are monitoring.

NY asked about the performance around the GAP rehoming funding and the risk if they have a bad year then they wouldn't be able to continue? ER explained the target we have set is realistic, and they meet with GAP fortnightly. Peter M also spoke about how you don't want their standards to drop to increase their adoptions. GAP also has a policy in which dogs can be returned at any time which is to their credit but also ties up the foster system. Peter M said that numbers being adopted are impressive - a great job, also with the American Adoption Program. Working with the RIB with a better alignment and supportive of this, more focused on getting things done as opposed to just reporting.

3. GRNZ Welfare Manager

Policy Update: Safe Return to Racing Policy and Best Practice Guidelines; Rehoming Policy; Euthanasia Policy V2; Paper: Breeding Exemption Policy - changes?

The Safe Return to Racing Policy and Best Practice Guidelines policy was taken as read. ML went through the change of policy and worked through some of the teething problems encountered in administering the new Policy. Concurrently have also held a workshop for trainers where trainers could contribute positively to the best practice guidelines. Additional feedback on the initial policies. 60 days between racing and nomination, would rather see dogs racing every five days rather than five times in 28 days. Awaiting feedback on whether the breeding females should have to use this policy.

Rehoming policy; there has been a change of wording to make it more consistent with the Rules in terms of requiring desexing. Would seek to include in the rules ALL greyhounds even if kept as a pet by LP, or private rehomed will be desexed.

Euthanasia policy to be updated in regards to dog bites with a dangerous dog not having to have an NOI.

Breeding Policy; currently working to include the special circumstances. Wanted to bring back to this committee, to confirm the intent of this committee that only one additional service would be permitted for a breeding female over seven years Rules imply up to two and this is up for discussion, there is a sub-committee for breeding exemptions, which can exercise discretion. If this committee says yes, do we need to restrict special circumstances? There was discussion around this. There would need to be a Rule wording change, to remove the implication for additional services. Include this in the breeding policy, one service after seven years, but before eight years of age. All in agreement.

Recent GA GAC Meeting: Prohibited and Restricted Practices Rule, Mandatory dental prophylaxis Rule, GA Injury Epidemiology Study, Dr S Rosanowski - Update

A lot of the discussion at VAC is analyst specific, screening limits and rules. Subsequent to this meeting have received advanced notification from RIB of an imminent change to the level of meloxicam screening in NZ, a significant change to industry current practice. Would be developing LP education and discussing veterinary education with NZVA prior to these changes coming into effect.

Michelle went through the Prohibited Practices paper, all papers taken as read. In regards to allowing a breeding female to race, DM said we should keep. All in agreement.

International Welfare Meeting Update

This update was taken as **read**.

SIRC minutes update

ML has taken this as read. Again this is work that is ongoing.

Transition from SAI - paper in AVJ

ML circulated this paper and has taken this as read. This week has been advised that the GA Board will progress this and end Surgical AI at the end of next year. We support this in principle. Details for how NZ is to achieve this to be worked through.

Research Update: Massey study Abstract circulated

This report was taken as **read** and ML thanked KL for providing. How NZ Greyhound Racing Industry, Licensed Persons Perceive the industry, Greyhound Welfare and their Ability to Create Change paper by Sandrine Korver, which will be published soon.

4. Update on Track Management Programme

General update on track management programme - Operational Report attached

ER started BW's report as he was indisposed. Had Auckland Track surveyed, UTS came out and assessed the track. We are looking at putting an age of dogs racing at the venue, perhaps veterans racing. Injury rate at Auckland has reduced to what it was, the nature of having a two turn track there will be more injuries than a one turn track. ER discussed the employment strains at the moment on finding someone suitable as a track curator. Staffing is one of our biggest challenges in Auckland at the moment. Waikato Track has new staff which are great, our safest track at the

moment. Hatrick - three staff working on both the oval track and the straight track. PN curator there is on medical leave so also having resourcing problems. Looking to shut PN for 6 weeks from 1st October for track remediation work. Addington, have had issues where injury rate rose, geo surveying the venue and there were inconsistencies in the base that had been compromised when previous remedial work was done. Addington was closed June/July, with an extra meeting in Invercargill, our participants handled this greatly. Extensive work was done at Addington, BW oversaw the project for 4 weeks. Took out 645m boxes as they were starting on a bend. Moved back the 520m boxes 5m. Initial feedback has been reasonably positive, injury rate lower, also put in safe chase lure. Addington surface is in a much better and consistent basis. Still managing water content, in particular making sure it doesn't dry out later in the day. One of Bill's messages to the track staff is to get that water into the track the day before the race meetings. Southland now have a permanent staff member.. The track does have limitations due to not being remediated for a significant amount of years. We will look to close this for 4-6 weeks for remedial work some time in early 2025. The venue did handle the two meetings a week very well. Overall looking good in terms of the Track Management Project that BW has introduced. Biggest issue overall is the staffing resource issue. Indebted to Bill.

BW now joined the meeting (1.47pm). Bill touched on what ER had said.

5. Racing Update

Injury Update (As provided for RIB Programme review meeting)

Worst was the increase in the major 1 and 2 injuries. MD went through his paper which was taken as **read**.

GG spoke about changing the rules about 7 dog races having vacant box 1, what happens if you draw a 6 dog field - we have gone vacant box 1 and 2, for 5 dog field we have gone 1,2 and 8. Second question with the rule change, does the rule change stipulate that as more data comes in can the configuration change due to lack of data, and MD acknowledges that yes the latter.

MD spoke about the KPI's which were very related to the injuries. The straight track has kicked off with two non-tote meetings and two non-tote meetings scheduled with our next races today. There was a race where 3 dogs fell, the 5 Dog was wearing full blinkers which MD noted that perhaps worthy of consideration that full blinkers that get replaced by a single blinker, this is as dangerous as getting pulled up for marring or failing to pursue.

Population Management

MD went through his Population report and this was taken as **read**. There is a slight adjustment to the breeding numbers, due to not capturing a few litters that were born very late July, this will be circulated to the committee.

GG acknowledged that this was great data as Victoria hasn't been able to catch this.

6. Rehoming and RtR Numbers / Outcomes Update

Rehoming Update (As provided to RIB Programme review meeting)

DW happy to take this as **read** and take any questions. Domestic adoptions are up. Aim with the American Project next year is to increase slightly to about 180 dogs in the whole season, missing the entire winter period and the summer period. Numbers are pleasing. August has started off slow which isn't ideal but Peter M noted not a great time of year for rehoming generally. Things in motion such as Canterbury A&P Show which we are doing and looking at modest advertising inline with our budget. Overall more discipline in our operations and collection of data.

Private rehomes was only piece where there was no documentary assessment of the dog, a declaration has been introduced which gives the data of where the dog has gone. There is a matching document which is on our website - helping matching dogs personality to the correct home and the New Owner's Booklet which is now on our website under the private adoptions tab and has been circulated to this committee. (check this has been) Still expect to have some teething issues, are still some dogs that we have had issues trying to find desexed information. (Check this section of CE report) Discussion around returns, GAP had 60 returns last year, which then end up coming back to GreatMates as they have no kennelling. Discussion around this and kennel space. Also discussion around RtR dogs recovered but nowhere to go so still in RtR. Going forward with America starting 13 September, all dogs are ready to go.

7. RIB Update

In August, the RIB presented a refreshed approach to monitoring GRNZ, recognizing the following:

Progress Noted:

- Improved performance against most of the 15 focus areas since the December 2022 final report.
- Progress against the recommendations in the final report (28 of the 75 RIB recommendations were implemented, and a further 41 were embedded, evaluated or closed)

Revised Approach:

- The revised monitoring program continues to focus on the 15 areas, with six key areas receiving higher attention due to progress and associated welfare risks.
- Moves more to a monitoring position
- New model looks at the adequacy of controls (rules, standards, policies), compliance and policies
- Timeframes and sample auditing

Key Areas of Focus:

- Injuries
- Rehoming
- Licensed persons and greyhound registrations (traceability = location v microchip v person in charge)
- Standards, rules, and policies
- Euthanasias and deaths
- Track standards
- maintain due diligence required by the Minister
- goal to deliver efficient monitoring and streamlined Ministerial reporting

9 other Focus Areas

- Recognise progress to the point some substantively closed. Population management
- Inform and educate the industry
- GRNZ information systems
- Governance
- Kennel standards
- Investigate/adjudicate on animal welfare breaches
- Information management
- GRNZ/RIB engagement
- Stakeholder engagement

Audits

The external review of our audit program is ongoing. In phase one, 15 stakeholders were interviewed, and a review of audit practices and associated documentation was conducted. The RIB has received a draft summary of findings, which is currently under consideration.

In the final stages of drafting ministers' reports now, noting it is the first report monitoring under the new approach, everything is going smoothly so far.

8. General Business

Peter M noted his apology for the next meeting.

No other general business.

Close of meeting at 1.56pm.

Next Meeting: 30 October 2024.

Minutes approved:

Signed:

Date: 30/10/2024