

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Animal Health and Welfare Committee  
TAB Building 106-110 Jackson Street, Petone  
Wednesday 24 April 2024 10.30am**

**Present:** Allen Bryce, Chair (AB)  
Kat Littlewood, Vet and Massey Lecturer (KL) (videoconferencing)  
Dave Matheson, Vet (DM)  
Philip Morrison, Vet (PM)  
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)  
Paula Lemow, NAWAC (PL) Observer (video conferencing)  
Darrin Williams, GRNZ (DW)  
Peter Mason, NAWAC Observer (Peter M) (videoconferencing)  
Bill Wilson, GRNZ Track Manager (BW) (videoconferencing)  
Michael Dore, Racing Manager (MD)

**Apologies:**

**Minutes:** Chantelle Askew, AHWC 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  
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

## **Welcome**

The full meeting commenced at 10.35am with the Chair welcoming everyone.

## **Minutes of Previous AHC Meeting**

The minutes of the AHC Meeting held on 21 February 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. Discussion around PBD races and a recent petition that went to the Board.

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

### **1. Chair's Report**

AB discussed the membership of the committee and confirmed members and observers. NY was under the impression that he was an RIB observer. *[Note: this has since been confirmed: AB.]*

**Action:** AB to recirculate Terms of Reference to the committee.

PL explained that she participated in the meetings for NAWAC not MPI. Peter M agreed with PL that this was correct. AB said SPCA would like to become an observer of this group. AB sees value in having them on board and AB and ER are currently considering whether and how this should be progressed.

AB explained that he had written to the Minister for Racing (Deputy PM Winston Peters) last week emphasising that greyhound welfare is being jeopardised by the lack of certainty of the industry and the industry needs more certainty on its ongoing existence. Emphasised from his point of view as Chair of this committee that greyhound welfare, not just participants' welfare, is being adversely affected by the lack of certainty in terms of the future.

AB explained that First Aid courses have gone ahead. Have had trials of the straight track at Wanganui, and straight track racing might commence late May. ER explained that with the straight track it's quite different to the oval track in terms of lure drivers and additional staff will be needed from Monday. AB spoke about injury numbers, GRNZ has established an injury task force - to be discussed later in this meeting.

### **2. GRNZ Chief Executive Report**

#### **Ministerial Review - verbal update**

Still waiting for a response from the Minister. We will continue to do everything appropriately. The quarterly progress report has not been released yet - the Minister will decide when it can be released due to new information on page 5 about the size and scope of the industry.

### **KPI's - 31 March 2024**

Major concern is KPI's. Target is to have a reduction of 15%. Rates for 2nd quarter (Dec-Feb) were poor but have improved in March - more detail later in meeting. Interestingly Australia has had similar results over the summer period. Target Work Force to look at all options and what we can do. In terms of tracks there were concerns over the injuries in Auckland: racing was suspended at the track while a comprehensive report could be conducted by Prof David Eager and Scott Robins from Australia. Racing is expected to resume on 5 or 12 May - all PBD races with crossfalls and cambers of the track reshaped.

There is also the problem with the Manakau lease venue as the council wants to make it an Athletic Track, the Council is expected to decide on the timing of this development by 30 June. In the meantime the lease is on a month to month basis. If we had a more medium term certainty about use of this venue GRNZ would look to do more significant work.

The average age of dogs racing in Auckland is also older, looking at what other strategies we can apply to see some restrictions on those older dogs racing. MD currently doing analysis. Restriction on level of racing or conditions for dogs racing in a veterans grade.

Waiting lists are of concern. Breeding numbers down 38%. Confidence about the industry going forward. Another factor is capacity, we have a clear euthanasia policy, need to drive our rehoming figures up. Last 6 months have been an improvement domestically with the promotion of more events. Hence the America Project. Intent is that each month we will export 15 dogs to Chicago and 15 dogs to New York. Fly dogs to New York on a Wednesday where they will stay at the ARC at JFK for the night then the dogs will travel to Chicago and go to the WAGS Hotel by the airport in Chicago. Overnight there then the adoption agencies will pick them up on the Saturday. Advantage is flying Qantas. We can take 15 dogs. JetPets must comply with our welfare standards. Every dog going to the States effectively will spend a month at Levin to get appropriate vaccines, crate training, transport the dogs from Levin to Takanini where they will spend the night. MPI did inspections yesterday afternoon and checked all the dogs that left yesterday. With New York 15 will fly in Friday and then adoption agencies will pick them up from the ARK on Saturday. Intending 205 dogs over 6 months. This will benefit the waiting lists across the country. Only exporting Green dogs. First shipment due to leave tonight. More dogs coming up from Christchurch to Levin on Saturday. Have kept this low key, following appropriate protocols. One of the 15 dogs was lame on Tuesday so we withdrew this dog and 14 will fly. AB said GRNZ needs to be prepared for some negative publicity. AB said it would be great to have videos and photos of the dogs on their journey and being well looked after throughout the process.

RNZSPCA gave useful feedback on GRNZ's export guidelines. GRNZ will respond to the SPCA's feedback, nothing too concerning. DW explained to fly to America they have full health checks, all dogs will be desexed.

Peter M noticed in feedback from SPCA clarifying that there has been no formal position taken on by NAWAC. He doesn't think it's necessary to have a formal position. PL said if there is formal guidelines that NAWAC need to approve she can take to the committee.

Action: Make amendments to response to SPCA and recirculate.

### **Quarterly Report**

Intention is to continue to do our quarterly reports. At this stage we have not released this report to the public, have sent a copy to the Minister. Figures from this are pretty encouraging and

highlight the contribution that the industry gives. No surprises with the report, want to be completely transparent.

Peter M asked about PBD races and feature races? ER explained that MD will be the best person to confirm the number. Very much a fan of PBD races.

### **3. GRNZ Welfare Manager**

#### **SPCA Submission GRNZ Export Guidelines**

Make it clear that this is a GRNZ protocol. AB suggests that we need to make clear these are guidelines for GRNZ staff to follow but also GRNZ is managing the whole process and our commitment in terms of welfare. Complying with the standards that we have written. DW said that we have changed the deregistration process to now show travel traits.

SC asked how we chose the dogs. Main consideration for selection is suitability to travel and their behaviour.

#### **RIB consultation on proposed changes to Welfare Standards - discussion**

Discussion around impervious flooring. Second was the requirement to use a veterinary grade detergent. Subsequently received feedback from RIB. RIB said it was an unnecessary change to the requirements. NY said they didn't feel the change was necessary and explained that most LP's were compliant. ML didn't see it as a weakening of the standards. AB said he would have thought clean, dry and hygienic is a good description of what is required. NY responded that the easy way to obtain clean, dry and hygienic is through impervious surfaces. AB: the committee appears to be comfortable with clean, dry and hygienic. If we settle on that RIB will provide feedback as it implements the proposed Standard on how practical it is and any implications for welfare. KL said getting as specific as possible, her vote is vote for clean dry and hygienic and impervious surfaces. SC mentions that impervious may not mean comfort. PM discussed wording issue we need to get through. This issue was left with ML to attempt to adapt wording to best reflect the views expressed by the committee. NY reiterated that the Standards were GRNZ Standards and the RIB would assess against the Standards as written.

#### **Safe Return to Racing Policy and Guidelines update**

ML discussed the Safe Return to Racing Policy. The RIB was consulted, and open consultation has been out for about a week now, with feedback already from the industry. Hoping to have this endorsed at the Board meeting in May and then can be operational.

Females are prone to injury when in season, current rule they are not able to race when in season: 28 day standdown. Their return also needs to be considered in terms of Policy Guidelines. NY commented that GRNZ software must be able to administer this policy.

#### **Breeding Exemption Policy update**

The Breeding Exemption Policy update was discussed and if there should be a fee.

#### **GRNZ Draft Rehoming Policy**

Essentially separating euthanasia from the rehoming policy. The GRNZ Rehoming Policy was read and discussed by the AHC. ML asked for any feedback to go back to her by 10 May.

DM had a correction to the document.

### **GRNZ Draft Euthanasia Policy**

The GRNZ Draft Euthanasia Policy was discussed and noted. Again if anyone could get back to ML by 10 May.

### **Proposed changes to GRNZ Welfare Standards - Transport** (paper provided by E Whelan).

The proposed changes to GRNZ Welfare Standards were discussed, including a discretion to allow a longer stay in a mode of transport for feature racing events or exceptional circumstances.

In the examples outlined in the paper NY was not supportive of any discretion applied, and queried whether applications should go to ML not MD. NY thinks this creates another loophole. Discussion around this, and what is an 'exceptional circumstance'. Discussion about changes to the Standards to allow discretion, and the stipendiary stewards would need to be communicated and approving these, NY disagrees and says they wouldn't want to be endorsing it. AB says more work to be done on it, overall the committee wasn't comfortable with it, and did not approve the proposal. AB suggested ML work further with EW. RIB were not consulted with in this particular instance of 'exception'.

### **4. Update on Track Management Programme**

BW joined the meeting at 12pm via video link. Racing has been suspended in Auckland. A few issues with the track and injuries, as well as staff leaving (one long term curator moving to Australia), gave opportunity to suspend racing activities and realign track infrastructure and staffing positions. Subsequently David Eager (UTS) and Scott Robbins (ex GRV) visit to assess the track. DE and SR visited the venue on 5 April, consulted track staff and participants, still waiting on the completed report with recommendations. Cross falls and levels of the surface are now reinstated to where they need to be.

The old lure at Manukau has been replaced with the Safe Chase Lure. Addington should receive theirs in late June. Four out of six tracks will now have these lures. Hatrick will receive one towards the end of the year. Will monitor lure use and incidents if any at Ascot Park.

BW explained there is no dispute we have had a spike in serious injuries. It is a long-held industry belief that hock season occurs during summer. Track preparation and conditions don't change too much over the seasons. Don't have an obvious reason for the spike observed. Continue to look at the widespread contributing factors. From a track perspective not seeing anything outside the track standards.

AB discussed the SIRC committee and if it were possible to have access to minutes. **Action: ML will circulate minutes from the previous SIRC meeting.** Will be surveying trainers who have a high rate of injuries with their dogs, and those with low rates, to investigate what can be done to reduce injuries.

### **5. Racing Update**

#### **Injury Update**

MD went through the Greyhound Population 23/24 Season and explained the numbers. Addington's track injuries have reduced recently. PBD began for middle-distance racing at Manukau and Cambridge from February 1st. It started very badly at Manukau with three serious injuries, one requiring euthanasia, in a very short time. This contributed to the decision to suspend racing there.

**Action: MD to send out updated copy of his report**

### **Update from Racing Committee (meeting 16 April)**

MD would like to have warm-ups taking place to see if it makes a difference preventing some muscle injuries particularly the older greyhounds. ML mentioned that Auckland have the highest gracilis injury and they have the shortest distance on the track in terms of walking to the blocks. AB mentioned that Palmerston North club had the pre-race kenneling area Temperature at 16 degrees.

**Action:** AB suggests that GRNZ follow up on these issues with each of the clubs.

### **6. Rehoming and RtR Numbers / Outcomes Update**

#### **Rehoming Update - Adoption numbers circulated**

The adoption numbers were noted and discussed. RtR numbers were full but have had some movements with other dogs, a lot of the dogs have now finished their rehabilitation. 3 years ago 50, last year 59, and 59 this year, being fully rehabilitated and finding homes.

AB acknowledged pleasing to see the numbers increase and greyhounds finding homes.

Staff currently working on an owners handbook.

Education modules have been rolled out.

AB mentioned that KL might want to be part of the behavioural assessment process but she is going on maternity leave.

### **7. RIB Update**

#### **Audit outcomes**

NY read out the audit information data as of 5 March 2024. As of 5 March, 145 audit reports have been issued and 844 improvement notices raised, an average of 5.8 improvement notices raised per audit report. 379 improvement notices have been raised for facility related non-compliance and 465 improvement notices for greyhound related non-compliance.

As of 5 March 2024, 350 (41.5%) improvement notices have been closed out and 68 audits completed.

A total of 2406 greyhounds were scanned and/or sighted during the 104 audits (greyhound section audits and full audits). Veterinarians checked all greyhounds during the audits. Amongst other findings, 95% had grade 1 or grade 2 teeth - an excellent outcome.

ER clarified check in percentages non-racing dogs once a year and racing dogs twice a year. AB confirmed that this wouldn't include greyhounds adopted out to the general public.

### **8. General Business**

AB discussed that he had drafted Terms of Reference for the The RTR (Rehabilitation to Rehoming) and Red Dog Panel, and the Breeding Exemption Subcommittee, and would like any members and observers to get back in the next 1-2 weeks.

DM asked that the exemption policy the quorum is 3 people but what if someone is on holiday? AB suggested that anyone of the reserves of the committees could be a reserve.

**Action:** Check with MJ and JE if they are happy to continue to participate.

**Action: members and observers to get back to AB with comments of the draft ToRs within the next 2 weeks.**

There was no additional general business to discuss.

The chair thanked everyone for their time.

PM will be an apology for the next meeting as in Canada. AB also mentioned he will be an apology for the September meeting, AB has asked Peter M if he could possibly chair that particular meeting. KL will not make the June meeting. The group wished KL well with her upcoming delivery.

**Action: Peter M to check with NAWAC that he can chair the 3 September meeting.**

Close of meeting at 2.55pm

**Next Meeting:** 26 June 2024

**Minutes approved:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**