

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Animal Health and Welfare Committee
Distinction Palmerston North Hotel & Conference Centre, 175 Cuba St, Palmerston North
Wednesday 21 February 2024 9am - 1.30pm**

Present: Allen Bryce, Chair (AB)
Kat Littlewood, Vet and Massey Lecturer (KL)
Dave Matheson, Vet (DM)
Philip Morrison, Vet (PM) (via videoconferencing)
Sally Cory, NZVA (SC) (via videoconferencing) - until 12.30pm

In Attendance: Edward Rennell, (ER) CE GRNZ
Michelle Ledger (ML) Welfare Manager GRNZ
Nick Ydgren RIB, Observer (NY)
Paula Lemow, MPI (PL) (video conferencing)
Darrin Williams, GRNZ (DW)

Apologies: Peter Mason, NAWAC (Peter M)
Bill Wilson, GRNZ Track Manager

Minutes: Chantelle Askew, AHWC Secretary (CA) (via video conference)

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 9.02 am with the Chair welcoming everyone.

Minutes of Previous AHC Meeting

The minutes of the AHC Meeting held on 13 December 2023 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 discussed yesterday's field trip and found the visits to both Great Mates Levin (GM) and the Races useful. PL thanked everyone for the invitation to visit these facilities and found it very useful and insightful, especially gaining further understanding of raceday processes and really enjoyed it. AB keen to do audit visits as per NY invitation to members - NY confirmed that individual AHC members and observers will be able to accompany RIB auditors on their audit visits to see training premises and the audit process.

ML spoke about RtR dogs present at GM and reflected that yesterday's visit was really important for the Committee to understand how agency is delivered in the rehoming setting, especially when considering the variety of enrichment provided to the greyhounds and individual preference being taken into consideration with individual toys, walk programs, training routines, free play etc. AB found it interesting to learn that a 'red' dog isn't necessarily always a 'red' dog if going into the right environment, and if the right home is found for it.

DM found the enrichment side of it was really helpful and found GM staff to have a really good attitude towards all the dogs. Overall very helpful for everyone who attended.

KL asked if it was possible to get cases from GM into the learning modules. DW discussed the modules, plenty of cases, no reason why we can't do that and share information. Great Mates now have monthly meetings, a lot more communication between contractors.

2. GRNZ Chief Executive Report

KPI's to 31 January 2024

ER's key issue is the current injury count. KPI's number of areas are encouraging, apart from injuries. First quarter injuries were 19% down on the benchmark - second quarter is 1% up on benchmark. There is no one solution, we can not eliminate injuries but must minimise and prevent where we can. This was a key focus at the Board Meeting, our most serious issue at the moment. Injury advice and prevention will be a key aspect.

In terms of traceability, looking to adopt GWIC check-in principles. Ensuring every greyhound on the database will have a check in which will ensure no lost or missing dogs. Currently have 95%

accuracy for racing dogs and 99% for non-racing dogs. Confident we will be at 100% for both in the near future. Dogs that haven't had a check-in have been dogs that haven't raced in the past 6 months. Will make sure every dog will be checked in the next 6 months.

In regards to injuries, two tracks are of concern, Manakau and Addington. GRNZ have taken over responsibility for the Addington track staff in late 2023. GRNZ acknowledges we have an underlying problem of maintaining Addington track properly. Auckland is acceptable for racing currently but requires work, the issue there is with the council regarding plans for the venue becoming an athletics track. With pressure on Auckland's infrastructure and budget, GRNZ is hoping that will be 5-6 years away rather than 1-2 years, and is currently trying to negotiate a longer lease (ideal would be 3x3 lease) as at the moment the lease is month-to-month. Part of the issue is the current review from the Minister. Some certainty around the future of the industry would enable better planning of infrastructure spending and allow some security to the industry to move forward with strategy and improvements.

Ascot Park and Auckland are the only tracks where we don't employ the staff, as the club does in each case. From 1st April GRNZ will employ all track staff in NZ. The average age of dogs racing at AKL is 3.2 years, and 2.8 years at Addington- so older dogs are racing in Auckland. Older dogs are more susceptible to injuries. Potentially a factor is that they are still racing because rehoming is taking too long. The USA rehoming project will possibly assist by reducing waiting list times by allowing earlier entry into the rehoming system.

GRNZ is looking at what we could do differently to minimise injuries that we are not doing at the moment. This is the primary focus for the Injury Taskforce established. Three areas the Board agreed to 1) accelerate Rule changes required for vacant box 1 (injury rate is lower when vacant box is 1 in a 7 dog race). 2) A dedicated taskforce to enable injury review of underlying factors and the development of mitigations, 3) Analysis on the trainers' injury rates and associated factors. Courses for LPs on First Aid and injury prevention will run in late March/April. In our compulsory education programme there will be a component on injury prevention. The most pressing issue is making immediate improvements where we can.

We are looking at a potential new track in Ashburton, we now have a preferred design with a one turn track and a straight track outside it. GRNZ is currently awaiting detailed design specs and budget. Clearly a significant spend. Will be hard to get Board sign-off on major infrastructure investment when we have no certainty of our future. This is being discussed with the Minister's officials, as we need certainty going forward. Uncertainty is affecting the confidence of our industry. Our belief is there has been significant progress and this needs to be backed up with a decision.

American Adoption Programme

ER went through the American Adoption Programme slide show, which has already been presented to the Board. AHCW noted the presentation. In regards to the National Advertising Programme KL asked if we were doing advertising on social media as she and her generation doesn't watch TV. There was a discussion around who we are marketing at. ML spoke about target market, market research showed what demographic was more likely to adopt a Greyhound. NZVA AND MPI will be further consulted.

3. GRNZ Welfare Manager

Updates: Safe Return to Racing Policy and Guidelines

Has been before the Committee previously. Recently approved in principle for further broad consultation, by the Board. Consulting with RIB on designing a veterinary fitness to race certificate that on-track-vets will be providing to stewards. Pleased this work is progressing.

Changes to GRNZ Welfare Standards as Proposed

As proposed at the last meeting, the Board has accepted those changes. Next step is a 20- day consultation, in line with the GRNZ constitution seeking feedback from the industry. Progressing.

Private Rehoming Declaration and New Owner Booklet

Seeking some input from this Committee with this. This is where LP's are rehoming their dogs themselves to friends, family and acquaintances and not coming through Great Mates. Welfare standards still require them to have desex and dental certificates prior to adoption. Draft paper was sent yesterday to AHWC. The Draft LP Behavioural declaration form Private Rehoming paper was **noted** and **discussed**, as was the Draft Greyhound Behavioural History form.

GRNZ is creating a document on matching a dog's personality profile with the new owner. Idea is that the behavioural declaration will be an online process that LPs can fill out, email will be generated of their declaration and of their documents that they upload with details of the new owner. Discussion around this. No set time frame for this. AB said it is important to get feedback from the trainers, if they are happy with it, it will work. New owner information booklet under development to accompany this work.

GRNZ Euthanasia Policy Proposed Changes

ML proposing to make changes to this policy - regular review of evidence-based policies is good governance in the first instance and a recent case highlighting that the NOI process creates unintentional risks in the case of dog attacks on humans or other dogs. The rehoming landscape is changing by encouraging private rehoming and by adding USA adoptions. It makes sense to separate rehoming requirements and euthanasia requirements with its own standalone policy. This was discussed. Discussion around not creating unintentional loopholes. NY spoke of being able to prove a dog attack and the ability of some trainers to exploit that. Possibly the vet who assists them to exploit that too. Burden of proof discussed ie photographic evidence of a dog bite. ML mentioned aggressive greyhounds are very rare in NZ. AB confirmed that AHWC was supportive of these proposed changes with the caveat about unintentional loopholes.

GRNZ Hot Weather Racing and Travel Policy

The AHWC **noted** the contents of the report. There has been conflict with activists at the track wanting to measure temperatures in vehicles. Contentious issue. Re-open conversation about whether greyhounds are happy to race at 28 degrees. AB mentioned policy includes temp limits and post-race activities to cool them down: seems very balanced and reasonable. Discussion around this policy. ER asked is there is anything we can learn from the equine policies through RIB? NY said the horse racing standards are not at the level of the greyhound policy. Agreed that any instances of heat illness or heat stress must be consistently recorded and reported in order to measure the impacts of hot weather racing on greyhounds.

ACTIONS

- GRNZ to provide stats on heat-related incidents at NZ races.
- GRNZ to remind all stakeholders of Hot Weather Policy and procedures when hot racedays are expected.
- Education on cooling techniques for dogs, to be provided to trainers.
- Investigate recording humidity as well as temperature so that heat index can be considered as a factor.

Guidelines for the Export of NZ Greyhounds

This was discussed. Waiting on feedback from SPCA.

ACTION GRNZ to send guidelines to MPI and NZVA with invitation to comment.

Subcommittees

ML will reconfirm subcommittees.

Breeding exemption: ML, DM, PM

RtR and red dog decisions: ML, KL, Jim Edwards and Malcolm Jansen - with PM in reserve. AB thinks three for a quorum is adequate and this is the case for the other committee. In an event where none of the panel is available ML takes on the responsibility of the decision. PL asked if we need ToR for subcommittees? ML agreed this was good practice and good governance. AB to liaise with PL and assist with drafting ToR.

ACTION AB to create a document for each of the committees with ToR, purpose, membership and quorum - subcommittee chairman, admin for the committee, forms for the subcommittees. DW said there should be a time limit on when a decision has to be made.

GRNZ 1st Aid Courses

Updated Committee on the First Aid courses. First Aid kits have been distributed to the various clubs, individually named with LP's name and delivered to the LP's from the clubs. Other stakeholders have expressed interest. Third party provider will facilitate first aid courses for LPs. About 4 hours each - first two are planned for 9 and 16 March (AKL & CAM). Value is added to the first aid course by having an OTV demonstrate the on-track post-race injury check with a greyhound. The focus on providing first aid to the greyhound and getting them safely to their vet. How to do CPR, and apply what is in their first aid kit etc. KL asked if this was a requirement, it is not mandatory at this stage.

AHWC RtR Update Report

The AHWC **noted** and **discussed** this report.

4. Update on Track Management Programme

ER discussed the Track Management Programme with AHWC. Working with ML, Bill Wilson and Michael Dore through the injuries statistics and video records to determine what can we do, and what options we have.

All Whanganui races when commenced will be PBDs. Trials will be in the first week of March.

PBD has been extended to middle distance C0-C3 in Auckland, trialling this. AB asked if the trainers were behind this, the club was keen on it, mixed feedback on PBD from trainers.

Track Management - GRNZ Staffing Structure

ER explained BW is the best asset we have and has GRNZ's full support. Discussion over BW's skills being transferred to NZ track staff so BW doesn't have to travel as much.

5. Racing Update

Injury Statistics

Michael went through his statistics and the AHWC **noted** the report. The poorer injury stats for the last (second Nov-Jan) quarter are not due to dogs racing too often or to weight variations as these factors are now controlled. He is disappointed that the results from PBD are not living up to expectations - it seems that its beneficial effect is overwhelmed by other factors.

There are promising results with keeping box 1 vacant in a 7-dog race, or boxes 1 & 2, or 1, 2 & 8 where possible.

AB asked can we do analysis with trainers with highest injury rates and trainers with lowest rates and their facilities. Premises with sand runs have fewer injuries and are below our KPI target. MD: need to put aside what each trainer's surface is and aggregate sand together and turf together. The huge majority of trainers have straight runs - this might be a factor in not providing bone strength through remodelling on turns. ML asked about qualifying trials, MD explained that 80% of qualifying trials have 4 dogs.

AB asked ML about the GA Epidemiology of Injuries Research paper. ML explained this was an ongoing research project, GA contracted research for data across Australia and NZ -the risk model was initially built considering hock fracture injuries.

6. Rehoming and RtR numbers / outcomes update

DW went through his paper and yesterday's field trip. The AHWC **noted** this paper. There was general discussion around traceability, still work to be done here. Adoption numbers - would like to try and hit a number of 50 per month. With the American Programme this will help us get where we need to be. It will put pressure on Great Mates to process dogs a bit quicker. Social media was discussed again on how to reach younger people. AB said it is important to get social media content back from the USA from adoption homes to be able to confirm and show that dogs are in a good situation.

7. RIB Update

Audit outcomes

NY discussed the audit outcomes. As of 19 February 2024 there have been 31 full kennel audits and 115 partial audits, a total of 146 audits. There have been a total of 134 audit reports issued and 806 improvement notices raised, an average of 6.0 improvement notices per partial audit. 488 improvement notices are still open. ER has offered assistance with the closing out of these matters. Most 7-day corrective action reports (CARs) are for dental issues. Quality of ESE (Exercise, Socialisation and Enrichment) plans is sometimes an issue.

NY mentioned a need to assess the non-compliances and consider firstly why the message hasn't resonated and secondly is there another approach from us that might help to drive that behaviour change, such as a monetary penalty.

Audit Reviews are continually reviewed, have noticed since the introduction of the improved welfare standards is that the time spent on site going through the questionnaire is quite significant now, to the point where towards the end there is risk of losing that engagement with the trainer so have reviewed how the auditors form up the questions and now have a draft audit form that is about 50% the size of the original. It is still considerable and retains the ability to capture all areas of compliance and non-compliance but is a far more user-friendly document that is hoped to be rolled out soon.

AB indicated a keenness to come along to an audit in the CD so this will be organised, NY reiterated to the committee members to get in touch if they would like to see an audit up close.

8. General Business

There was no additional general business to discuss.

The chair thanked everyone for their time.

Close of meeting at 1.54pm

Next Meeting: 24 April 2024

Minutes approved:

Signed:

Date: