

## Veterinary Ireland Media Release 4th February 2017



### Ireland's Dog Trade and Breeding Establishments – What Next?

#### - Veterinary Conference in Cork

Veterinary Surgeons and Veterinary Nurses from all over the country descended on Cork this weekend, the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> February 2017, for the Annual Veterinary Ireland Companion Animal Society (VICAS) Conference. The conference at the Clayton Silver Springs Hotel, which ran scientific sessions covering Gastrointestinal Medicine and Surgery, and Feline Behaviour, also convened a panel of experts to inform the attendees on the latest developments on the extremely emotive and controversial topic of Ireland's Dog Trade & Breeding Establishments.

Veterinary Ireland, which represents vets working in the companion animal sector said that puppy farms or mills are covered under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act (2010), which grants licences under different size categories, obliges them to maintain a register and to undergo annual announced and unannounced inspections by local authority vets. Important documentaries and high profile animal seizures have highlighted the illegal elements in the puppy farm trade and the efforts of some establishments to circumnavigate legislation.

There have been some moves to encourage small farm enterprises to 'get into dog breeding', which can only be done in accordance with the legislation covering this sector. Guidelines in relation to puppy farming are open for review by the public ( <http://www.housing.gov.ie/review-dog-breeding-establishments> ) with Veterinary Ireland advocating for further focus on the health & welfare of dogs born on puppy farms including meeting socialisation needs, vaccination and mandatory microchipping. The dog trade is also covered by the Animal Health and Welfare Act, Transport of Animals (EU) 2005, Pet Passport Regulations (EU) 576/2013 and additional Trading Standards legislation that operates in the U.K.

The session on *Ireland's Dog Trade and Breeding Establishments* featured three expert speakers:

**Michael Sheahan, Senior Superintending Veterinary Inspector, Animal Welfare & Live Trade Division** the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine, shared a 'fact vs. fiction' presentation on recent experiences in Ireland of monitoring the international puppy trade.

"The commercial breeding of pups and the trade in such pups has been a topical issue in Ireland in recent years," said Mr. Sheehan. "A comprehensive piece of primary legislation (the Dog Breeding Establishments Act) was introduced in 2010 to start to bring some order to the business of commercial puppy breeding."

"This legislation requires those who have 6 or more bitches capable of being used for breeding to register with their Local Authority, and to comply with certain standards in relation to accommodation, care of the animals and record keeping," said Mr. Sheehan.

**Garrett Shine, County Veterinary Officer, Louth County Council** expanded on this dog breeding legislation and how it is applied. Mr. Shine explained that premises regulated under the Dog Breeding Establishments Act, are called Dog Breeding Establishments, abbreviated to **DBE**; and that there are different 'categories' of DBE.

## **Onus on All Dog Breeding Establishments to Register**

“The legislation applies to **any** scenario where a person is keeping 6 or more female dogs, irrespective of whether they are breeding them or not,” said Mr. Shine. “Therefore, as well as the commercial breeder, this legislation can apply to rescue centres, hunt kennels or boarding kennels, once they have 6 or more female dogs.”

“The onus is on every Dog Breeding Establishment, regardless of whether or not it is a commercial breeder, to register with their Local Authority. All of the establishments are inspected to ensure they are operating to a certain standard, however apart from the commercial breeders the other categories are deemed fee exempt.” Mr Shine said that there are currently 243 Dog Breeding Establishments in total registered under this legislation, of which approximately 70 premises are commercial breeders.

## **If You Are Buying A Puppy....**

Mr. Shine appealed to members of the public buying a pup to check if the place they are sourcing the pup from is properly registered as a Dog Breeding Establishment (DBE).

“Evasion relates to commercial breeders purposely working underground, so can be difficult to track down – but they are associated with puppies for sale through adverts with mobile numbers and hand-overs in car parks, as well as smuggling pups out of the country to UK, undeclared at the ports, or hidden in vans,” said Mr. Shine.

Michael Sheehan highlighted the introduction of new Animal Welfare legislation (The Animal Health and Welfare Act) in 2014, which updated and consolidated animal welfare legislation for all species.

In 2015, the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine introduced legislation making the Microchipping and registration of all dogs compulsory from March 2016, which should strengthen controls and traceability. All prospective new puppy owners are urged to insist the breeder produces the official certificate of registration before purchasing a puppy. Not only is this the law but it is also an easy first step to confirm you are dealing with a reputable breeder.

## **Transport Routes**

A number of pups bred in Ireland are exported to Britain. Michael Sheahan outlined that transport routes are via roll-on, roll-off ferry from Dublin Port or Rosslare Port. Alternatively transporters can travel via Belfast or Larne Ports in Northern Ireland. “All known dog transporters in Ireland are authorised under Regulation 1/2005 and their vehicles are approved by Department of Agriculture Food & the Marine (DAFM) Guidelines in relation to the approval conditions for vehicles transporting dogs,” said Mr. Sheahan. Copies of the guidelines are available on the DAFM website.

**Dr Shanis Barnard, Animal Behaviour Centre, School of Psychology, Queen’s University Belfast** presented on the subject of ‘Dogs Trade: State of Art & Ways Forward.’

“The European Union internal market allows the free movement of goods, people and animals across Member States,” said Dr. Barnard.

“There is only one piece of legislation providing for minimum requirements for the transport of dogs and cats involved in commercial practices; whereas welfare standards for dog keeping and breeding remain the sole responsibility of Member States,” said Dr. Barnard. “This generates scattered and un-harmonised legal framework, which may lead to unequal breeding and marketing that can compromise both animal welfare and public health – for example, zoonotic risks”

## Tackling Illegal Puppy trade

Delegates were told that with 81 million pet dogs in Europe, and an estimated 46,000 dogs traded within the EU each month, dogs can be considered one of the main threats to the spread of companion animal related zoonotic diseases, with other concerns including the poor traceability of moving animals, animal health and welfare during transport and deceived consumers.

“The Island of Ireland is one of the main suppliers of puppies for the UK market, and there is increased societal concern on the breeding and trade of pet dogs. Thus, the implementation of legislative frameworks and guidelines that safeguard consumers, public health, and animal health and welfare is paramount,” said Dr. Barnard.

Dr. Barnard called on improved public awareness, further training for veterinarians and networking between NGOs, competent authorities, breeder and veterinary associations in order to help to tackle the illegal puppy trade.

## Scientific Sessions

The scientific sessions running over three days at the VICAS Conference were led by

- **Dr. Mike Willard**, Professor of Small Animal Clinical Science at Texas A&M University, specialising in gastroenterology, hepatology, pancreatology and endoscopy. Dr Mike Willard was involved in ten different veterinary presentations during the 3 day conference in Cork on subjects ranging from chronic hepatic disease to intestinal issues, biliary tracts and oesophageal disease.
- **Laura C. Cuddy** MVB, MS, DACVS-SA, DECVS, DACVSMR, MRCVS, Assistant Professor in Small Animal Surgery, UCD, who has a strong interest in all aspects of orthopaedic, soft tissue, neurologic and oncologic surgery. Laura Cuddy’s presentations to veterinary and veterinary nursing sessions ranged from dealing with abdominal trauma to age for spaying or neutering.
- **Mairead Deasy** Dip AVN Dip HE CVN RVN, Head Theatre Nurse at Gilabbey Veterinary Hospital, Cork. She focused on nursing surgical gastrointestinal cases
- **Clare Meade MVB, CertVR, MANZCVS Feline Medicine** who opened Ireland’s first ‘cat only’ hospital, now runs The Cat Hospital just outside Cork City. Clare completed the ANZCVS examination in feline medicine in 2012 and is a founding member of ‘The Academy of Feline Practitioners’ an international group of feline experts. She is currently studying for the two year ISFM feline behaviour course. Clare Meade presented on tips for handling the cat in hospital care and dealing with feline house soiling.

## ENDS

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February, 2017

Media enquiries: Antonina Ni Dhuinn, Progress Communications

Tel: 01-2766117

Email [nina@progresspr.ie](mailto:nina@progresspr.ie)

## Editorial Footnotes:

*The Department of Environment publishes statistics every year. The current total is 243 Dog Breeding Establishments registered in total. This is a mix of commercial breeders and other categories.*

<http://www.housing.gov.ie/search/archived/current/sub-type/dog-control/type/statistics?query=>

*Fees laid out in the Dog Breeding Establishments Act:*

appropriate  
fee.

13.—(1) The appropriate fee shall—

- (a) in the case of a dog breeding establishment at which not more than 18 bitches are kept, be €400,
- (b) in the case of an establishment at which not less than 19 and not more than 30 bitches are kept, be €800,
- (c) in the case of an establishment at which not less than 31 and not more than 100 bitches are kept, be €1,600,
- (d) in the case of an establishment at which not less than 101 and not more than 200 bitches are kept, be €3,000, and
- (e) in the case of an establishment at which more than 200 bitches are kept, be—
  - (i) €3,000, and
  - (ii) €1,600 in respect of every 100 bitches in excess of that number.