

# VETERINARY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## Terms of Reference

### **Purpose**

The Veterinary Advisory Committee (VAC) exists to advise the GCCF Board on matters relating to the health and welfare of cats, both clinical and genetic, aimed at the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease, disorder and injury. The Veterinary Sub-Committee existed for a number of years. This document re-names that sub-committee and formalise its position in the GCCF committee structure with the aim to regularise the position of the Veterinary Officers, the Veterinary Advisory Committee and its objectives.

GCCF Byelaws have been amended to establish the Veterinary Advisory Committee as a GCCF standing committee.

### **Membership**

The Veterinary Advisory Committee has up to 10 members.

#### **1. *Veterinary Officers***

The GCCF Board has designated two official Veterinary Officers should provide a specialist (veterinary medical) service to the Board of Directors, GCCF office, cat shows, and the cat fancy in general. The Veterinary Officers, once appointed, automatically become members of the Veterinary Advisory Committee.

The appointment of a Veterinary Officer (as and when necessary) will be discussed by the VAC; the names of nominee(s) may come from either the VAC or the GCCF Board and will be considered by the GCCF Board who will make all appointments, since these are rightly regarded as official positions. The post(s) of the VOs should be confirmed by the Board annually.

The VAC and Board will take into account in their deliberations to nominate VOs possible conflicts of interest that may arise, such as veterinarians in general practice, or those who exhibit/breed specific cat varieties, to ensure impartiality.

#### **2. *Veterinary Advisory Committee***

The VAC will comprise up to 8 veterinary surgeons (two of whom will be the duly appointed GCCF Veterinary Officers, the remainder may be nominated by the members of the VAC), all of whom will have a specific interest in felines. In addition places will be available for a nominated member of the Genetics Committee and also a GCCF Board Director to join the VAC. This is in order to ensure good two way communication between both GC and the Board and to assist veterinary members in the interpretation of GCCF policy, rules and procedures. GC offers a reciprocal arrangement which provides a place for a veterinary surgeon from VAC.

A quorum for any deliberations of VAC will be a minimum of three veterinary surgeons plus either the GC or Board member. The VAC will be empowered to co-opt (for one or more meetings) additional veterinary surgeons (or other experts)

where specialist knowledge is deemed essential on any specific subjects on which they are charged by the Board to make recommendations.

The membership of the VAC is a matter for debate and recommendations for new members may be made either by the VAC or the GCCF Board. The formal appointment of all members of the committee will be by the GCCF Board.

The VAC will appoint a Chair and Secretary from among their members. A written record of each meeting will be taken and, once agreed as a true record by VAC members, will be despatched to the GCCF Office for immediate circulation to the GCCF Board.

### **Principal Functions & Accountabilities**

The Veterinary Advisory Committee is a sub-committee of the GCCF Board and reports directly to it; and through the Board to Council. The Advisory Committee's principal functions are:

- To advise the Board and Council on all veterinary matters relating to the health and welfare of cats, including genetics and genetic anomalies, best breeding practice, disease prevention and control, DNA and other testing, etc.
- To provide expert veterinary advice to GCCF staff.
- To advise BACs on relevant testing for known genetic anomalies and other clinical diseases.
- To undertake regular (though not necessarily frequent) reviews of the List of Veterinary Defects and both provide general advice and specific proposals for necessary/desirable changes or amendments, with supporting evidence if available.
- To provide advice and guidance on implementing the GCCF Breeding Policy.
- To review and advise on genetic and other tests available to cat owners and breeders and to assist Genetics Committee in giving information and guidance in "plain English" for the cat owning public.
- To advise/recommend as appropriate on subscriptions to websites and journals and to monitor research into cat diseases and the development of vaccinations, treatment and other interventions to both manage and cure cat ailments.
- To liaise as appropriate with Defra and other Govt departments and with veterinary schools and professional veterinary organisations on all aspects relating to the health and welfare of the domestic cat.
- To work with and support the Genetics Committee in developing links and liaison with academic institutions (such as universities and veterinary schools) undertaking research into cat genetics; where appropriate to liaise with the research and development departments of commercial firms such as pharmaceutical companies who may be developing tests or treatments/solutions to genetic defects.

Specific role and functions of Veterinary Officers:

Within the remit outlined above the VOs should work specifically to maintain a close dialogue between Show Management, the GCCF Office, exhibitors and veterinary surgeons in practice, and the Cat Welfare Group. This is a broad remit requiring a thorough knowledge of current veterinary best practice, the cat fancy, showing and breeding.

Of necessity this must, from time to time, involve confidential liaison between exhibitors and their veterinary advisers and to act as a constant source of reference for the GCCF Office staff. VOs should act as advisors in situations and cases affecting all veterinary matters such as vaccination accuracy, rejection from shows, clearance certificates and any other matters referred to them by the GCCF Board.

In practice the VAC should consider with care and in appropriate detail, every concern and matter referred to it affecting the cat world.

### **Frequency & Place of Meetings**

The VAC shall meet once per year, although meetings should be dictated by need and in case of more pressing matters, additional meetings may be called or telephone conferences with members may be used to discuss urgent issues, reach decisions and provide advice to the Board. In arranging meetings the Chair and Secretary should give due consideration to minimising the financial cost to the GCCF.

The timing and venue should be dictated by convenience and where possible should maximise the opportunity to share venues booked for other committee meetings or make use of venues offered gratis to GCCF (such as Agria Offices in London or Aylesbury). Members of the sub-committee may claim up to the normal GCCF travel rate for expenses.

### **Liaison & Communication**

The Committee should liaise regularly with the GCCF Board and through the Board to Council. Members of the advisory committee should be available to provide expert advice to staff at the GCCF Office on matters pertaining to the committee's remit.

The VAC should develop communication links with show managers, BAC Secretaries, breed clubs, the Genetics Committee, the Cat Welfare Group, and of course the Board, and should seek to advise them on all matters of cat health and veterinary medicine for which they are responsible.

Also assist in maintaining a dedicated area of the GCCF website so that breeders, exhibitors and the general public can be provided with accurate and up to date information on veterinary matters pertaining to cats. This should provide an opportunity to advise, and become aware of the concerns cat owners.

**Steve Crow, 27<sup>th</sup> March 2013**