

**Request from DGAL** (French Directorate General for Food): 14/09/2020

**Advisory Note issued by FRCAW:** 23/11/2021

**Initial request from DGAL:** To specify a minimum rest period for domestic carnivores between two events of the show-sales type.

**Request as reformulated by the FRCAW:** Having studied the existing literature and communicated with experts in the field, the FRCAW proposed that the request be extended to include the work required for a first comprehensive review of the welfare of domestic carnivores at events and gatherings (shows, competitions, exhibitions, sales) in France, outside the public health situation arising from COVID-19.

**This expertise is intended to:**

- Characterise the different types of events, the actors involved and their reasons for participation in the events;
- Identify the factors associated with such events that can affect the welfare of domestic carnivores, and the measures put in place to ensure animal welfare in the course of the events;
- Propose future pathways concerning the ‘vigilance points’ that should be monitored to reduce the detrimental consequences of such events on the welfare of domestic carnivores.

**References:**

Regulatory texts:

- Arrêté du 25 octobre 1982 relatif à l'élevage, à la garde et à la détention des animaux – Annexe II : Chapters I and II. [Article Annexe II - Arrêté du 25 octobre 1982 relatif à l'élevage, à la garde et à la détention des animaux - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#)
- Arrêté du 3 avril 2014 fixant les règles sanitaires et de protection animale auxquelles doivent satisfaire les activités liées aux animaux de compagnie d'espèces domestiques relevant du IV de l'article L. 214-6 du code rural et de la pêche maritime. [Arrêté du 3 avril 2014 fixant les règles sanitaires et de protection animale auxquelles doivent satisfaire les activités liées aux animaux de compagnie d'espèces domestiques relevant des articles L. 214-6-1, L. 214-6-2 et L. 214-6-3 du code rural et de la pêche maritime - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#)
- Code rural et de la pêche maritime – législative section : Book II, Title I, Chapter IV, Section 2, Dispositions relatives aux animaux de compagnie. [Section 2: Dispositions relatives aux animaux de compagnie \(Articles L214-6 à L214-8-1\) - Légifrance \(legifrance.gouv.fr\)](#)
- European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals, 13 November 1987.

Scientific texts:

- BARNARD S., PEDERNERA C., VELARDE A. et DALLA VILLA P. (2014) Welfare Assessment Protocol for Shelter Dogs. Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise G. Caporale. ISBN 978889086916

- FONTBONNE A. (2000) Etude sanitaire de l'élevage canin et félin et contrôle de socialisation du chien. Ecole Nationale Vétérinaire de Lyon, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de la Pêche.
- GEIGER F. et NAU M. (2015) Le rôle de l'État dans l'encadrement de la génétique des carnivores domestiques: propositions d'évolution. Ministère de l'Agriculture, de l'agroalimentaire et de la forêt. Rapport n°13093-2
- Commission Européenne (2016) Eurobaromètre Spécial 442 – Novembre – Décembre 2015: « Attitudes des Européens à l'égard du bien-être animal » Résumé. ISBN 978-92-79-57118-3. doi: 10.2875/97120

#### LOOF and SCC Regulations:

- Livre Officiel des Origines Félines (2021) Règlement des expositions LOOF
- Société Centrale Canine (2019) Règlement des expositions canines – Mis à jour le 7 avril 2020

### **Scientific Opinion of the FRCAW – summary of the report ‘Expertise sur le bien-être des carnivores domestiques (chiens et chats) en contexte d'évènements’ (opinion on the welfare of domestic carnivores (dogs and cats) in the context of events)**

#### **The work was conducted in three stages:**

1. Summary of known facts reported in the literature to provide background details on the French domestic carnivore population and associated regulations, and to characterise the different event types;
2. Interviews conducted with different actors (officers from the Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion and Population Protection, official veterinarians, dog and cat breeders, organising associations) to characterise the events more precisely and to identify factors that could affect the welfare of dogs and cats during such events;
3. Online survey to characterise the different actors and the practices associated with the participation of breeder-exhibitors at such events, and to specify factors that could affect the welfare of domestic carnivores.

The literature survey for the first stage was carried out between January and February 2021. The documents selected for use in the writing of the report are listed in the References section.

The second stage was carried out between January and May 2021. Members of the health, animal protection and environment (SPAÉ) services from nine *départements* (Isère, Hauts-de-Seine, Allier, Nord, Gard, Val-d'Oise, Yvelines, Haut Rhin, and Moselle) were interviewed, along with members of the Brigade Nationale d'Enquêtes Vétérinaires et Phytosanitaires (French national veterinary and phytosanitary investigation unit), on the issues they had encountered that could affect animal welfare in relation to domestic carnivore events.

For the third stage, three questionnaires containing between 35 and 60 questions were created with the help of the Société Centrale Canine (SCC, French kennel club) and the Livre Officiel des Origines Félines (LOOF, French official cat stud book), in order to collect the views of official veterinarians and dog and cat breeder-exhibitors on their participation in domestic carnivore events (benefits, experiences, means, etc.) and to identify directions for the improvement of dog and cat welfare during these events. The questionnaires were made available on line during March-April 2021. The main findings are described below.

### 1) Characterisation of the population studied:

Estimated populations recorded in the literature for domestic carnivores in France in 2020 were 7.5 million dogs and 15.1 million cats. 30% of dogs had pedigree certification (with under 10% of dogs entered in the LOF<sup>1</sup>) and under 5% of cats had documented pedigrees. The SCC and the LOOF formally add more than 200,000 and 50,000 new entries each year respectively to their official registers. Figures for the overall annual renewal rate (number of births of puppies and kittens per year in France) are only estimates. The number of annual puppy births is estimated to be over 70% for non-LOF animals and those of uncertain provenance (possible imports from abroad). Most breeders are described as ‘family’ breeders, with fewer than ten bitches weaning at one time, or fewer than three breeding female cats, and producing fewer than five litters each year.

### 2) Characterisation of events:

An ‘event’ in the context of this work is defined as any gathering of domestic carnivores belonging to physical or moral persons, organised as either a one-off event or a regular event, for sporting, zootechnical, commercial, educational or leisure purposes: that is to say any competition, trial, show, exhibition, fair or sale of animals. Only events where domestic carnivores are gathered in France (outside the context of the public health situation arising from COVID19) and where registration with the local DDPP and the designation of an advisory official veterinarian are required are included in the study. That is, any event that requires a venue to be booked and involves attendance by the public.

The local authorities participating in the survey reported between 15 and 70 organised domestic carnivore events per year (constituting the greater part of registered animal gatherings), events being held on average at a rate of 2 to 5 each month and with around one in two being for commercial purposes and involving the presence of puppies or kittens for sale.

Attendance at these events ranges from several dozen to several thousand different dogs or cats and the events are often organised over two days at a weekend.

Other than events for the commercial sale of puppies, the canine events are mainly shows where dogs are judged against breed standards (488 dog shows with over 150,000 entries organised in France in 2019), competitions for sporting dogs or dog-training contests (2,859 events with over 75,000 entries for dogs in France, source: SCC).

Events for cats are mostly beauty contests (69 shows organised and more than 24,000 entries for cats in France in 2019, source: LOOF).

### 3) Characterisation of the people involved

Figures for responses received during the six-week on-line survey period are as follows:

- 42 replies from official veterinarians, distributed across 25 *départements* and 10 metropolitan areas, of whom **29** were appointed to attend events for domestic carnivores in France between 2015 and 2020;
- 166 replies from canine breeder-exhibitors, distributed across 75 *départements* of whom **161** took part in events for dogs in France between 2015 and 2020;
- 303 replies from feline breeder-exhibitors, distributed across 76 *départements* of whom **236** took part in events for cats in France between 2015 and 2020.

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<sup>1</sup> Confirmed entry in the French Pedigree Book

Responses from official veterinarians, just under a quarter of whom are themselves breeders of domestic carnivores, state that they take part in ten events per year or fewer, mainly canine events, and mostly events involving under 100 animals. Almost all of them consider that they are responsible not only for the monitoring of the health status of the animals but also for their welfare.

Most responses from breeder-exhibitors state that the breeding of cats or dogs is not their main professional activity, that they breed only one LOF breed, own fewer than 7 breeding females and produce fewer than two litters per year.

Most of the dog breeder-exhibitors who replied do not participate in shows for the sale of puppies, but mainly in breed standard contests (or in sporting-dog or training trials), with **an average frequency of one attendance every two months or less.**

Most of the cat breeder-exhibitors who replied participate in beauty contests, with or without the sale of kittens, with an **average frequency of one attendance every two months or less.**

The vast majority of respondents (more than 92%) consider it to be 'very important' that the welfare of dogs and cats is ensured during events. In addition, 28.6% of dog breeder-exhibitors and 47% of cat breeder-exhibitors would be prepared to pay higher entry fees for events where the organisation and service provision showed greater respect for animal welfare.

#### **4) Identification of factors that can affect animal welfare:**

Drawing on answers to those questions where the various respondents were in agreement, the following features – as they arise in connection with events – were identified by the FRCAW as having a potential negative effect on animal welfare:

##### **1) Directly:**

- Conditions relating to the organisation of events: Most respondents shared the view that animal welfare can be affected by the conditions under which an event is organised. In fact, most dog and cat breeder-exhibitors who replied indicated that certain conditions under which events are organised make it impossible to guarantee the satisfaction of the physiological or behavioural needs of each animal. In light of the replies to the on-line questionnaires and interview questions, the FRCAW recommends that particular vigilance should be exercised with regard to the provision/maintenance of the following:
  - Cleanliness of the venue throughout the event
  - Restricted contact between the public and animals being shown
  - Controlled sound levels
  - Adequate ventilation/aeration inside the building
  - Temperature-controlled sheltered spaces (e.g., heated or air-conditioned exhibition spaces, shaded car parks and show rings, etc.)
  - Limited time spent on the grooming table
  - Presence of sufficient food and free access to water
  - Presence of a litter box for cats
  - Opportunity to take dogs outside
  - Opportunity for the animals to withdraw from the public at will in their exhibition runs/housing.

Over and above the organisational details for each event, respondents expressed the view that, when at an event and compared with the animal's usual environment, levels of contact, noise and general bustle are increased and, by contrast, time available to rest, go outside and play is reduced, as is the

comfort level of the housing. Most breeder-exhibitors are also prepared to acknowledge those aspects of event participation that are stressful and tiring for their animals.

- Exhibitor practices. Exhibitors, regardless of the wider organisational conditions, can directly affect the welfare of their animals, especially in cases where the animals that are taken to events are not suited to this type of environment (e.g., animals that are fearful or are sensitive to changes in their surroundings, etc.) and where the exhibitors have not learned to recognise the signs of poor welfare in these species. In particular, some canine and feline exhibitors do not remain with their animals overnight at an event lasting more than a day. Some animals are thus left alone at night at the event venue or in the vehicle used by the exhibitor to transport them. This practice has the potential to cause psychological stress in the animals, linked to the change of routine and environment. In addition, it can also lead to temperature stress at times of extreme heat or cold.

## **2) Indirectly:**

- Variations in the on-site attendance patterns of the official veterinarian for the event. Responses to the questionnaires demonstrate that the veterinarian often has sole responsibility for the monitoring of anything between several dozen and several hundred animals, working to a tight operational schedule, mainly at the point where animals arrive on site, and with checks on identification numbers and vaccination records as the priority. Further, the veterinarian may not carry out routine patrols of the event site, instead attending the venue only when requested to do so. As a consequence, the state of welfare and health of the animals on arrival (and during the event) is not always checked and it is in fact possible that some of the animals participating in events are unwell or infested with parasites. The welfare of other participating animals that have arrived in good health can be affected by the subsequent transmission of disease or parasites. Indeed, some of the dog and cat breeder-exhibitors who replied, albeit a minority, reported health problems in their animals on their return home from events.
- Lack of checks. Nearly half of the responding veterinarians consider that they have neither the time nor the means to check the animals' welfare. This is confirmed by the officers from the Departmental Directorate for Social Cohesion and Population Protection interviewed, who state that, because of the large number of events organised each month/ year, and the fact that these are generally held at weekends, it is technically impossible to guarantee the presence of one of their representatives at every event to inspect welfare conditions. Thus, the relevant authorities are mostly reliant on judgements made by the official veterinarians in determining the need for attendance at a given event for monitoring purposes, otherwise acting in response to concerns raised by other welfare-conscious parties (visitors or domestic carnivore owners, event organisers, etc.).

Furthermore, the transport conditions of the animals on arrival are checked only very rarely. It is a fact that travel is an inevitable element of participation in events. If transport conditions are poor, or if transported animals have a low tolerance for travel, this can strongly affect the animals' welfare, all the more when the distances travelled are long.

Equally, inspections of the way that participants set up their stands and the conditions under which the animals are shown occur only rarely, leaving participants and organisers with the responsibility of ensuring the welfare of the animals at the event.

Generally, the absence of checks can have an indirect effect on the welfare of animals participating in events because no penalties are exacted for poor welfare and/or no awareness-raising of poor practices is accomplished, creating a situation where such poor practices could become endemic.

- Lack of enforcement of the animal-welfare regulations during events where these are contravened. In addition to the absence of checks during events, some responses from official veterinarians describe failures to act in cases where the rules have not been respected or to provide information to the DDPP. Indeed, only 64% of veterinarians stated that they write a report to their DDPP as a matter of course. Additionally, DDPP officers reported that the post-event health reports sent by veterinarians on compliance with the various criteria for exhibition (for both health and animal welfare) often demonstrate that little information has been gathered or, when they are sent, they contain few details.

## **5) Identification of measures taken to support respect for animal welfare during events**

Generally, all those consulted (DDPP and Investigation Unit officers, breeder-exhibitors and veterinarians) agree that breeder-exhibitors are concerned for the welfare of their animals. This consideration is evidenced by various practices implemented with the improvement of the welfare of the participating animals in mind:

- Use of specific equipment: a substantial majority of the breeder-exhibitors who responded use their own exhibition accommodation (cages or runs) at events, taking into account the comfort and psychological and behavioural needs of their animals in their choice of equipment and in its daily maintenance (provision of a resting surface, litter box regularly cleaned for cats, opportunity for the animal to choose to be on its own, opportunity for play, regular eating patterns and constant water supply).
- Rest times between attendances at events: more than two thirds of the breeder-exhibitors who responded schedule a rest time for their animals between attendances at events. Where this was the case, the median duration of this break was one week for dogs and two weeks for cats. This median rest period nevertheless requires elucidation because the seasonal character of some event types means that this rest period is highly variable depending on the time of year at which an event is held. Rest between two event attendances is necessary for each animal so that best account can be taken of its physical health and mental balance.
- Choice of participating animals: almost all the replies from breeder-exhibitors agreed that it is important to select animals for participation in an event according to their temperaments and whether they meet behavioural criteria, as well as on health grounds. The use of behavioural grounds for selection makes it possible to ensure that only those animals with less sensitivity to noise, bustle, the presence of litter-mates etc., are exposed to stress factors.
- Special training for the animals: most of the breeder-exhibitors stated that they establish a particular training routine<sup>2</sup> to prepare their animals for attendance at events. As is the case for the selection of animals, the advance training of animals can make it possible for the potential negative effect of events on the welfare of the animals to be mitigated.

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<sup>2</sup> Specific training refers in particular to education, training or physical preparation for dogs and education, socialisation, habituation and handling for cats. The FRCAW wishes to make clear that only forms of training that are intended to improve animal welfare during events are considered in this paragraph, and in no case does it include training practices intended to improve an animal's performance to the detriment of its welfare.

- Withdrawal from participation: almost all of the breeder-exhibitors who replied consider that signs of stress or behavioural problems are as important as health problems in determining whether to end an animal's participation in events.

**6) Future pathways concerning the 'vigilance points' that should be monitored to reduce the negative animal-welfare consequences of participation in events**

In light of the vigilance points described in Section 5, the FRCAW proposes the following improvement pathways to best take account of animal welfare:

- Develop a training programme or dedicated modules (obligatory or optional) on animal welfare at events (shows, fairs, exhibitions, competitions, trials, sales) to allow those involved to adopt good practices in a systematic way: such training schemes could contain information on the transport, housing, feed and water, behavioural indicators, quarantine and rest appropriate to each species. This could improve the detection of behavioural signals from domestic carnivores at events and thus optimise selection of participating animals, and/or lead to more rapid action to relieve suffering from poor welfare in an animal where needed. These modules could be offered on the one hand to official veterinarians (to complement their training in the health and zootechnical aspects of the breeding and raising of animals) and on the other to exhibitors (a training module/option could be added as a further qualification requirement under the ACADED scheme (declaration of knowledge concerning companion animals from domestic species)).
- Develop an assessment tool for use by individuals at events: like the training proposed above, such a tool could enable a range of different actors at events to assess their own practices and thus encourage a systematic approach to the consideration of animal welfare at events. We note that such tools have been produced to assess the welfare of dogs in shelters ('Shelter Quality' by Bardard et al. 2014<sup>3</sup>) and could be adapted to events for domestic carnivores.
- Designation by the organisers of an animal welfare advisor for each event in addition to the official veterinary advisor and to act in support of the latter. This Animal Welfare advisor should be trained in animal welfare. He or she would be responsible for awareness-raising among participants in relation to animal welfare and its associated regulations; s/he could also be responsible for welfare monitoring of the dogs and cats. This proposal is supported in most of the replies from veterinarians, who are in favour of the presence of a second animal welfare advisor to help them during events, given the difficulty of their task.
- Establish an online monitoring hub to compensate for limitations in monitoring and the reporting of information: such a monitoring system, which would be easy to access and use (for example, a mobile application linked to the platform with a brief questionnaire), could be implemented in addition to, or as a replacement for, the digital or paper health report sent to the DDPPs. This database could hold in detailed form the full set of returns, good and bad (i.e. reports of non-compliance with regulations), made by veterinarians with regard to animal welfare during events, and would create a systematic route for the logging of health reports to be accessed by the authorities. The processing of this data would

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<sup>3</sup> BARNARD S., PEDERNERA C., VELARDE A. et DALLA VILLA P. (2014) Welfare Assessment Protocol for Shelter Dogs. Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise G. Caporale. ISBN 9788890869167 ([shelterquality@izs.it](mailto:shelterquality@izs.it))

allow greater precision to be achieved in identifying the negative and positive aspects of the organisation of events at national level and would provide a way to inform or notify the responsible authorities.

## 7) **Conclusion:**

The FRCAW draws attention to the fact that this work is a preliminary study and its conclusions are based on the analysis of questionnaire responses from a relatively small number of respondents compared with the estimated numbers involved at national level, and in the absence of direct in situ observations due to the small number of events organised in the past two years as a result of the public health crisis.

The list of ‘vigilance points’ set out in this report is certainly not exhaustive, there being some aspects of events that were not addressed given the complexity of the subject and the limited duration of the study. It nevertheless constitutes a preliminary checklist to which particular attention should be paid by the different actors involved in the organisation of events for domestic carnivores. To complete and refine this work, a number of next steps are possible:

- it would appear appropriate to interview further actors involved in these events such as professional handlers, judges for beauty contests and conformity to breed standards, event organisers (associations, breed clubs, private individuals etc.) and even visitors, to provide complementary data on attention to animal welfare needs at events for domestic carnivores;
- a study similar to the present one, on commercial shows for the sale of domestic carnivores should be carried out, as the full study of these events has not been possible in the present report given the lack of information available and the impossibility of attending events on the ground;
- to conclude this investigation, a study using in situ observations is necessary in order to assess objectively the state of the welfare of domestic carnivores during events with regard to organisational conditions and breeder-exhibitors;
- a risk analysis could be carried out for each of the vigilance points described in this report to confirm whether it is a risk factor for the welfare of these animals, and to quantify the associated risks for each;
- last, the FRCAW hopes that the methods used in this study can inspire similar studies on other domestic species involved in events, such as horses, farm animals and non-carnivores not included in the legislation (known as NACs).