**Information from the animal welfare commission 2024**

Over the past year, we have continued to work on the topics within our focus area in the same composition of 7 members. The following matters were discussed in four digital meetings:

In the area of overtyping and other potentially harmful breed characteristics, we have received information from our 5 departments that it has been sufficiently established how negative characteristics should be dealt with when compiling breed standards. This is as detailed in some departments as in others. As a committee, we have established that as soon as animal welfare is demonstrably at stake, we can make a statement about this breed or this breed characteristic. If this is not the case, this role is reserved for the relevant standards committee. As a committee we are always available for advice. For example, we discussed the choice of photos in the standard with the guinea pig section. In the case of a European show, both the final jury of the relevant department and the committee for animal health and welfare have a supervisory function regarding excessive breed characteristics.

The situation regarding bird flu remains difficult. It may be known that this disease has definitely manifested itself and will remain a risk. In Europe, this risk appears to be dealt with differently per country, making it possible to exhibit in one country and not in another. Although relaxations are sometimes possible, the definitive solution seems to lie in the availability of a vaccine. Vaccination of commercial poultry has already started in some countries, while in others the results of trials are awaited. When a vaccine in a suitable form is sufficiently available to our supporters, the question is again per country whether this provides space to exhibit sensitive animal groups again.

In preparation for the European Show in the Czech Republic in 2024, which it is now known will not take place, the committee has made a number of additions regarding the requirements for the housing and care of the animals. We have also advocated at the main board the obligation to vaccinate rabbits against RHD 1 and 2. During our consultations with EU commissioners in Brussels, it became apparent that we are seen as a risk. To protect our image and demonstrate our goodwill, it is important to show that we are taking measures ourselves. In addition, if vaccination is not carried out, the risk of an outbreak with many dead animals is real and catastrophic.

After we visited officials in Brussels in February 2023 who dealt with the TRACES certificate, it turned out that our conversation had had an effect. Since then, the EU has made a number of improvements to the regulations and recent communication also indicates that our committee's discussion has contributed to this. The 3 most important relaxations are:

- For certification, animals may be brought together, which means that only 1 TRACES certificate is required for large groups of animals from different breeders.

- The space available for neighboring countries to make regional agreements is filled by the countries concerned. For example, it has been agreed in the Benelux and between Belgium and France that animals without a TRACES certificate may cross the border when they stay in the border areas.

- An addition to the law makes it possible to transport an animal during a European show to a country other than the country where the animal came from. This makes sale and exchange during the show possible again, where previously the animal had to be returned to its country of origin.