Second Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Venue:** Agriculture House

**Date:** 15th January 2003

**Present:** Professor Patrick Fottrell (Chairperson), Aidan Murray, Martin Blake, Alison Hanlon, Jackie Cahill, Liam McKibbin, Mary-Ann Bartlett, Angela McCarthy, Bernadette Earley, Barbara Bent, Sean O’Laoide, Dermot Sparrow, Didier Rebet, Kevin Kinsella, John Stack, Derek Deane, Audrey Brown, T J Flanagan

**Opening Comments**

The Department apologised for unforeseen organisational problems, which resulted the delay in commencing the meeting. The chairperson acknowledged this and continued by welcoming everybody to the meeting. He introduced Liam McKibbin DARD and T J Flanagan ICOS who was representing Tom Doyle. The Chairperson emphasised the importance of having a quorum and thanked Mr McKibbin and Mr Doyle for representing their organisations.

**1. Minutes of the inaugural meeting**

The Chairperson commenced with the minutes of the last meeting.

**2. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson discussed a number of issues arising from the inaugural meeting as follows;

(i) the need for the Council to set out a work programme and draft strategic plans,

1. that sub groups should be formed where necessary, which would report to the Council,
2. the need to for the Council, through its Chairperson to liaise with the chairperson of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare to discuss any matters requiring a scientific opinion,
3. how the Council should focus on issues which would be dealt with in the next three years.

The Chairperson proposed that the Council would meet on the second Wednesday of the month, each month for the next three months in order to get things moving. The Council would review the situation after that period.

**3. Chairpersons Report on Visit to FAWC (UK)**

The chairperson reported on his visit to FAWC in the UK.

 He explained that the Council consults openly about the issues it considers and before embarking on a new study, carries out a written, public consultation. Studies incorporate consideration of detailed written and verbal evidence from interested organisations; examination of scientific data; and, commonly visits to farms, other agricultural holdings and research centres. Additionally, FAWC holds seminars with invited experts. Most reviews culminate in published reports, which are widely distributed through the UK and overseas.

 Recognising the increased emphasis on harmonisation of welfare controls across the EU, the Council makes contact with its counterparts in Europe, both to exchange views and to develop a co-ordinated approach.

 FAWC have published a number of reports relating to specific animal welfare issues and, on a regular basis, makes recommendations or voices concern to Government. They also send copies of report to the European Commission.

 FAWC believe that an animal's welfare, whether on farm, in transit, at market or at a place of slaughter should be considered in terms of ‘five freedoms’.

 Freedom from hunger and thirst – by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.

1. Freedom from discomfort – by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
2. Freedom from pain, injury or disease – by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
3. Freedom to express normal behaviour – by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.
4. Freedom from fear and distress – by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

FAWC expressed willingness to provide any advise which may be of assistance to this Council. The chairperson recommended that we should try and liaise with them as their work is of great benefit.

**4. Proposals for inclusion in the Work Programme**

The Council invited members to submit suggestions for inclusion in the work programme.

The suggestions for inclusion in the FAWAC Work Programme which had been sent by members to the Secretary were as follows:

1. Educational Programme
2. Code of Practice for Beef, Sheep and Dairy Enterprises
3. Agreed Audit Checklist – Good Farming Practice
4. Liaison between Dept of Agriculture, Farming Organisations & SPCA’s at local level
5. Animal Transport
6. Fur Farming
7. Fish Farming
8. Current EU topics/legislation on animal welfare
9. Horse exports to Italy
10. Link support payments to welfare standards
11. Cruelty& Neglect cases --- speedier solutions and by whom

The Chairperson went through the list of issues and recommended that initially the Council should focus on three issues of which they may decide to set up a working group.

 The issues discussed were as follows;

Educational Programme

The chairperson felt that this was linked to guidelines/information, which was identified in the Councils Terms of Reference.

## Code of Practice

Veterinary Ireland representative explained that while there is excellent welfare standards in sheep and beef, there has been bad publicity in such welfare cases in the last couple of months. Having been involved in cases he felt that there were some basic information/needs to be addressed. He explained how it was difficult to prosecute in circumstances where there were social issues. A code of practice in the form of a booklet would be useful as guidelines for people to work off, he felt that good advice should be the first port of call.

 The IFA endorsed this, stating that many cases would certainly be social and that there was a need to try and alleviate this. The SPCA also endorsed this view.

The Chairperson asked the members if they agree that a small working group should be set up to cover points 1, 2 and 3. He recommended that Sean O’Laoide would act as Chairperson of this sub group. The members of the council agreed the sub group as follows; Sean O Laoide, Dermot Sparrow, John Stack, Derek Deane, Bernadette Earley, Barbara Bent. The group would agree its terms of reference which would be put before the Council for agreement at the next meeting. The chairperson emphasised the need for secretarial time and commitment from the Department of Agriculture and Food. The Department confirmed that this would be forthcoming.

## Agreed Audit Checklist – Good Farming Practice

The proposal was submitted by Veterinary Ireland, its aim was to have an agreed audit checklist where welfare cases could be scored. This would be more objective than subjective and would be useful as a tool, in assisting veterinary inspectorate to complete assessments with some consistency.

The IFA did not think that this was necessary, they felt that the Department’s veterinary inspectorate should already be in a position to know whether there is cruelty issue or not.

The chairperson explained how it was not unusual to have checklists, many organisations use checklists to assist them.

The SPCA endorsed the view that a checklist would be a useful tool and would assist everyone concerned.

The Department pointed out that prosecution was not the first avenue in welfare cases and commented on how it has invested heavily in training and producing guidelines.

DARD also pointed out that they had internal instructions for use by inspectorate staff when carrying out welfare visits. Both the Department and DARD said they would forward a copy of their respective guidelines to members of the Council.

Liaison between Department of Agriculture, Farming Organisations and SPCA’s at local level

Members of the council expressed interest in organising a structure between the different groups liaising together.

ICOS commented on how there is a structure already in place. However they would support this view.

The IFA explained how they would look at putting together a more formal structure on a county by county basis to deal with cruelty case at a local/county level. The Department recognised the merit in this and supported the IFA in its view.

Another issue raised was the need for a voluntary alarm system, that could get the ethos across e.g. if there are social problems, it may lead to animals being neglected. This could be avoided if there was an alarm system in place.

The chairperson asked identified members to put forward some proposals, which would form the basis of a paper for the next meeting on organising a structure for liaising between the Department/Farming Organisations and SPCA’s at local level. The IFA and the SPCA said that they would submit proposals, with the Department agreeing to produce a paper based on such proposals.

## Fur Farming

A document from CIWF was circulated at the meeting, which related to Fur Farming in the Republic of Ireland.

 CIWF feel that this will become a real issue in 2003 and that it would be useful to ask Professor Broom to attend one of the meetings of the Council to discuss the issue.

The chairperson asked members of the council to have a read of the document and revert with any findings at the next meeting.

 The chairperson asked members if they would leave issues 5,7,8,9 and 10 to the next meeting for discussion and this was agreed.

## **Conclusion**

The chairperson concluded the meeting.

He acknowledged that one sub group had been set up. The group would agree its terms of reference, which would be put before the Council for agreement at the next meeting.

 He added that submissions will need to be submitted to the Council re structures for liaising between the Department of Agriculture and Food, Farming Organisations and SPCA’s at local level and re-iterated the importance of papers being circulated to Council members before meetings.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wedneday, 12th February 2003.

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Professor Patrick Fottrell

**Chairperson**