**Minutes of the Fourth meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council.**

**Venue** ; Buswells Hotel

**Date**; 9 April 2003.

**Present** ; Professor Patrick Fottrell, David Walsh, Aidan Murray, Martin Blake, Mary-Anne Bartlett, Barbara Bent, John Stack, Sean O’Laoide, Tom Doyle,

Bernadette Earley, Alison Hanlon, Didier Rebet, Lorcan McCabe, Dermot

Sparrow, Kevin Kinsella, Angela McCarthy, Denis Simonin ( EU SANCO).

**Apologies**; Derek Deane, Liam McKibben and Jackie Cahill.

**1. Opening Comments.**

The Chair welcomed the alternate and Mr Denis Simonin who was representing DG SANCO, Unit E2 Animal Health and Welfare, Zootechnics. It was agreed that Mr Simonin would make his presentation followed by questions after which the agenda would be adopted.

**2. Presentation.**

Mr Simonin covered the following areas (copy attached with these minutes);

* Competencies of DG SANCO on Animal Welfare
* Slaughter and killing
* Transport
* On farm
* Related international issues
* Current initiatives
* Foreseen initiatives

Questions and Answers were on the following topics;

* Export Refunds and their link to animal health and welfare
* EU initiatives on animal health and scientific evidence related thereto
* Linkages and cooperation between the OIE and WTO
* Outturn Approach regarding animal welfare
* How does national research fit into and contribute to SANCO initiatives
* Cross Compliance and its enforcement
* Future initiatives following FMD
* Labelling and its implications for Irish produce and imports

The Chair thanked Mr Simonin on behalf of the Council for the enlightening and very interesting presentation and said that this EU presentation may be scheduled bi-annually as it is very important that the members be kept up to date with SANCO developments.

**3. Minutes of the last meeting.**

The Secretary drew the member’s attention to a clarification on the Third Indent under paragraph 4 on Fur Farming where the Department of Agriculture and Food only carry out welfare inspections from time to time rather than at the time of licence renewal.

**4. Matters Arising.**

The members agreed to the Chairs proposal that all such matters be taken as outlined under the agenda and that other issues would be taken under A.O.B.

**5. Briefing by Working Group on Codes of Practice.**

It was agreed following a presentation by the groups Chair that the drafts on Beef and Sheep farming be circulated to all members with a view to having all opinions returned to the Secretary by Monday 28th April in order to a final presentation made at the next Council meeting.

During the discussion it was further agreed that issues raised during the working groups discussions such as animal remedies , the lack of certain medicines and the welfare and health implication of sheep tagging could be referred as specific questions seeking precise answers to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare. These draft guidelines when finalised and adopted by Council could then be forwarded to the Corporate Affairs Division of the Department and matters such as acknowledgements and printing would be taken care of at that point. Following this procedure they could then be formally submitted to the Minister as the Councils advice on voluntary codes of practice. The Council could then undertake a formal launch and then have it circulated to all relevant parties.

The Chair thanked the group for their speedy and productive work and asked all other members to have their opinions back to the Secretary by the agreed date of 28th April in order to have the drafts fully completed and circulated before the next meeting.

**6. Corporate Affairs Procedures.**

Following a general discussion on the recent references in the press to the Councils work programme, the Chairs proposal that all members refer all enquires back through the Secretary was agreed by all. The web page when fully operational will be a source of information for the public and press. The Chair will examine all queries received for further elaboration. The Chair asked all members to forward whatever press clippings they had to the Secretary who would in turn would circulate them to the members.

**7. Presentation by DAF on Cooperation.**

The Chair reiterated the importance of having this item of the work programme finalised shortly as it is a critical area of farm animal health and welfare and one that when implemented will be of benefit to all. A general discussion took place during which several points as follows were raised;

* Names of all SPCA’s, IFA and DAF personnel in local offices should be co-ordinated and made available for easy contact
* The reluctance to contact “official authorities” will have to be overcome
* Guidelines or codes of practice should be set out in an easy to read user friendly format
* A confidential telephone help line should be considered
* Important to have a system of help in place in order to prevent cases going to the extreme, especially where social issues are involved
* Emphasis should be put on the fact that a help system is available to all parties rather than on a bureaucratic or regulatory system where reporting is a priority
* Emphasis should also be placed on a community effort where cases could be reported early without being seen as interfering into a farmers business. This would also cover farms not seen from the main road and housed animals
* It must also be emphasised that regardless of codes or guidelines that prosecutions may follow in some cases

The Chair’s proposal that a working group consisting of Council representatives from the SPCA’s, DAF and IFA meet and report back with their recommendations was agreed by all. If further agreed it will then be forwarded to the Minister with a recommendation for adoption.

**8. A.O.B.**

The following items were discussed;

* **Transport**, it was agreed that this will be an item on the next agenda following which a letter containing the Councils views could be sent to the Minister. The Secretary will circulate the Teagasc transport document.
* **Irish Horse Welfare Trust**, it was agreed that a DAF veterinary official would contact the Trust and report back to the June meeting.
* **Fur Farming**, the CIWF document will be revised and circulated by the Secretary, it was emphasised that these are not the views of the Council. The Chairs proposal that the Irish Fur Breeders Association should be asked to submit a written position paper on their industry was agreed. The IFA will liase with the association.
* The Chair reported on the **FAWC visit to Ireland**. This group has already visited France and are looking at the movement and sale of animals post the Foot and Mouth outbreak of 2001.
* **The next meeting is scheduled for 11th June starting at 10am.**