# Minutes of the Eleventh Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Venue:** Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin

Date: 27th May 2004

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), K Kinsella, B Early, D Sparrow, B Bent, A Murray, J Stack, MA Bartlett, AJ Hanlon, A McCarthy, M Blake, S Foley, C Connor, S O’ Laoide, T O’Halloran (Secretary).

**Apologies:** J Cahill, T Doyle, D Deane.

# 1. PRESENTATION ON FISH FARMING

The meeting began with the Chairman welcoming all invited speakers, from whom the Council received the following Powerpoint presentations: -

* **The Welfare of Farmed Fish** by Peter Stevenson from the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA);
* **Maintaining and Enhancing The Welfare of Stock – the Fish Farmers’ Role** by Mr Richie Flynn, Executive Secretary, Fish Farming Section, Irish Farmers Association assisted by Dr Hamish Roger;
* **Irish Quality Salmon and Fish Welfare** by Ms Catherine Morrison, Bord Iascaigh Mhara.

Copies of presentations circulated to all members on 31st May.

Each presentation was followed by a question and answer session. Discussions followed as to how fish farming fitted into the remit of DAF and the role FAWAC had in terms of advising the Minister on the matter. DAF explained that it has a very limited function in relation to fish farming, which essentially centre on the use of animal remedies (medicines) in this area.

Following the presentations, the Chairman thanked all of the parties involved. It was agreed that FAWAC would identify and communicate its concerns regarding fish farming in Ireland to the Minister by means of a letter drawn up by the Chairman and DAF. CIWF said that the final letter should be agreed by all members of Council. The Chairman said that the letter would be run past all members of Council.FAWAC is also to request that all necessary action be taken to address the areas of concern highlighted, including if necessary, the conveyance of these concerns to his colleague the Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources.

# 2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes were agreed with amendments under Item 6 - Puppy Farming; Item 7 – Transport of Animals; Item 11 – Ritual Slaughter.

# 3. MATTERS ARISING

**Transport of Animals**

DAF reported on the collapse of the proposed EU Regulation on Animal Transport. During discussions at pre-council and at bi-lateral meetings, it had become apparent that the required level of consensus for agreement did not exist resulting in no agreement at Ministerial Council level. The EU Chief Veterinary Officers have met since and an attempt has been made to see if any advancement could be made if the less contentious elements of the proposals were removed. It would appear however, that the will to advance proposals does not exist at present. Ireland is disappointed at no agreement being reached following the enormous efforts made in trying to introduce a new regime for the transport of animals. Despite their best efforts though, it would appear that the dossier has been shelved for the moment. The current position is that it would be up to another Presidency to put this item back on the agenda. DAF opined that the incoming Dutch Presidency did not have it on their agenda in terms of taking the issue forward.

CIWF queried if the Irish Presidency could not continue to advance the document? DAF replied that following the huge amount of work put in and the number of bi-lateral meeting undertaken, a sense of shock prevailed at every level at the failure to reach a compromise. This was a very important issue for a lot of parties and a period of reflection is now necessary; the final conclusion it that even if there is a will on the part of the Irish government to progress the matter, that will did not exist at EU level at present.

DARDNI stated that the United Kingdom (UK) shares the disappointment and frustration of Ireland and expressed the view that the UK might re-schedule the item during their Presidency, as they are anxious to progress the issue.

It was noted that Local Authority Veterinarians have put forward a policy paper on this topic which will go before the Council of Veterinary Ireland for consideration in July. S O’Laoide agreed to keep FAWAC informed.

# 4. WORK PROGRAMME

**Farm Animal Welfare Education/Guidelines:** The Working Group Chair stated that the document was proceeding very well. Another meeting of the Group is to take place on the 9th June during which proposals submitted from Council members will be considered. He is confident that they will have a document for print by the end of this summer.

**Working Group on Co-operation:** IFA expressed concern at a number of recent TV programmes by SPCA organisations, which highlighted animal welfare abuse/cruelty and requested that the organisation refrain from this type of PR regarding animal welfare cases. This was causing problems for the IFA Animal Health Committee who insists that client confidentiality be respected absolutely. IFA also suggested that perhaps this Council was trying to over formalise the situation with the Co-operation document and that perhaps the reference to sharing information should be removed from it altogether. This would ease IFA concerns re. the ventilation of issues in the media - which can show farmers in a bad light - and this is something that they would have a problem with. ISPCA responded that it was part of their remit to highlight such cases, however if there are problems re. disclosure then perhaps all parties concerned should meet towards the end of June for further discussion. IFA concurred that it should be possible to get over the areas of concern. It was suggested that perhaps the Co-operation programme could be run on a pilot scheme basis for the first few months of operation.

DAF stated that they were perplexed as to what the difficulties with the draft document were as it was agreed that problems would be dealt with in a collaborative, informal way, involving some or all of the organisations involved and the draft attempted to fully reflect this approach. If any organisation has a difficulty at this stage, it should be specific so that it can be addressed without delay. It is important that an informal national system in place for Winter 2004.

SPCA stated that it was their priority to get the system up and running – animal welfare must not be jeopardised.

The Chairman stressed that he is anxious for the Working Group to have signed off on this document by the next meeting so that it may be circulated to all Council members for agreement at the next Council meeting. If this is not possible, then perhaps the IFA could look at the document and identify the areas that are causing problems for them and list their recommendations as to the way forward, for consideration by Council. He appreciated that there are sensitive issues to be addressed. He is anxious that media reportage of the next high profile animal welfare case could leave Council very exposed. Council must be seen to be doing its utmost to help the animal welfare situation.

It was agreed that all parties involved in the Co-operation Group would hold a post-meeting re. wording of Co-operation document.

The Chairman expressed his sincere appreciation to all involved in the preparation of this document.

**Working Group on Medicines:** The Working Group Chair informed Council that the Terms of Reference as minuted at the last Council meeting were accepted by all on the Working Group. Presently they have a working document, which the group is going through line by line. Steady progress was being made. It is hoped that a list of medicines and a list of recommendations will be available to be put before Council by the end of summer.

# 5. PROGRAMME FOR 2004

**Visit to Fur Farm –** 10th June 2004

A letter from the Irish Fur Breeders’ Association (IFBA) dated 26/5/2004 was circulated at the meeting and it was agreed by all present that it would be both inappropriate and unacceptable to exclude any member of Council from the proposed visit as it is important that all members be given the opportunity to fully inform themselves of any given issue. It was agreed that the Secretary would write to the IFBA requesting that all members of Council members be facilitated, or if that is not possible, that a small number of members, to be nominated by Council, be facilitated with a visit to the farm.

Failing this, it was agreed that Council would invite IFBA; an animal welfare scientist; DAF and an animal welfare group to address them.

**Visit to Abattoir** – July 2004

The purpose of a visit is to observe ritual slaughter without stunning. However, it was accepted that Abattoirs generally close for the month of July. If a visit is not possible, it was agreed to invite a member of DAF, with knowledge of this process, to address Council. This visit is to be rescheduled for the autumn, possibly September.

# 6. NEXT MEETING

Subject to agreement of Irish Fur Breeders’ Association, 8th July, 2004.

# 7. AOB

Mr Michael Flynn, IFA is to replace Mr Derek Deane on the Farm Animal Welfare Guidelines/Education Working Group.

SPCA stated that contact had been made by them with the Irish Horse Welfare Trust who confirmed that they had not heard from Council in over a year. It was agreed that the letter should re-issue.

Also, a request was made by some Council members for meetings to be held in locations outside of Dublin for travelling purposes. This was agreed.