# Minutes of the Twenty Fifth Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Venue:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise, Co Laois.

Date: 15th May 2007.

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), S Foley (CILDEHS), S O’Laoide, (Vet. Ireland),

A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett CIWF),

D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), M Blake (DAF), B Earley (TEAGASC), T Doyle (ICOS), R Kennedy (IFA), M Beazley (ISPCA), D Cronin (ICMSA).

**Apologies:** K Kinsella (IFA),J Bryan (IFA), A McCarthy (ISPCA) represented by M Beazley, L McCabe (ICMSA) represented by D Cronin, T O’Donnell (DAF), C Connor (DARDNI).

**Secretary:** T O’Halloran.

# PRESENTATION

**‘*Longevity of Irish Dairy Cows’*** by Dr Laura Boyle, TEAGASC. Presentation was followed by a question and answer session. Chairman expressed his thanks to Dr Boyle.

# MINUTES

Minutes adopted with three amendments.

# MATTERS ARISING

## On-Farm Slaughter

DAF and Vet. Irl. have agreed to look at drafting a Protocol/Guidelines for farmers and Private Veterinary Practitioners (PVP). The issue is the slaughter of a casualty animal on-farm, welfare of the compromised animal and meeting obligations to food safety and meat hygiene legislation. The transport of an injured animal to a local abattoir for slaughter is also being considered in the context of the new transport regulations. Local abattoirs must agree to accept certification of PVP’s and IFA has undertaken to get agreement with the food/meat processing industry. Other issues concern over 24mth testing for TSE’s – it is not usual for local abattoirs to take animals over this age.

CIWF expressed the view that the system in place in N. Ireland is the best way forward. It was confirmed that a similar approach is being adopted here whereby an animal can be killed on-farm and that the meat from the slaughtered animal can be sold into the commercial market.

A general discussion took place with regard to the slaughter of animals resulting from farm animal welfare cases. DAF confirmed that numbers of animals disposed of are not collated centrally however these numbers are very small and this would be borne out by EWS. They pointed out that often in such cases, the animals are already dead or at a stage where the best option is to cull. A new IT system is being put in place in DAF that will make central collation possible.

## Economic Burden/Animal Welfare

Invitation to give presentation had been extended to Prof. T Lang, Health Management and Food Policy, City University, London, England, however he is unavailable until next year.

Invitation also issued to Mr J Malone, former Secretary General of DAF. In his response, he suggested that given the limited amount of research into this area, there is scope to engage in a research programme. Chairman suggested that Council should recommend funding be provided to TEAGASC (under the Walsh Fellowship Programme) to engage in such research.

TEAGASC informed Council that it is already engaged in a two-year research programme into animal welfare in suckler herds, which is funded through a Leonardo De Vinci EU research programme. This research is being conducted EU wide so that it will be possible to compare and contrast results. Herds are graded as good/poor/optimum and to-date research shows that welfare on Irish farms is very good. It is her view, that the big economic burden regarding welfare is animal health and disease. B Earley agreed to approach her colleagues re. adding economic research as a Stage II to the above. TEAGASC, Grange, has an economic modular however it would require a meeting of a new sub-group to draw up a plan as to how to proceed. A Hanlon asked that she be included in such a sub-group.

Vet. Irl. supported a scientific approach, stating that there is a need to find out if aggressive welfare economics will compromise the producer. The disproportionate power of the multiples over their suppliers should also be looked at - multiples follow consumer trends but the question is, will it ensure viability of the supplier? DAF added that welfare labelling is currently being discussed at EU level.

It was agreed that B Earley would brief Council at the next meeting on her research to-date following which Council would open it up for discussion as to how to proceed.

CIWF would like research extended to pigs and poultry. CIWF suggested that the major supermarkets be invited to give a presentation.

***Halal Slaughter***

It was reported that efforts to identify a meat plant willing to demonstrate the use of a Stun Assurance Monitor are progressing favourably and that a plant might be available next month for visit by Chair of Sub-group and representatives from Islamic Cultural Centre Dublin (ICCD). Islamic groups in the United Kingdom (UK) support its use and ICCD are open to a demonstration. It is hoped that matter will be brought to a conclusion within the next 2-3 months. DAF meet with the meat industry regularly and keep it on the agenda.

CIWF are keen to be involved and requested to attend the demonstration. In response, Chairman suggested to Council that it should be left to judgement of sub-group Chairman as to who should attend. This was agreed.

***Veal Production***

CIWF and Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in the UK have embarked on an initiative with stakeholder groups to look at use of calves. CIWF to circulate details to Council via Secretary.

CIWF expressed concern at calves being shipped via Larne down through Britain through Dover to France. DAF stated that they are not aware of any major numbers of deaths in exported calves.

Vet. Irl. expressed the view that there is a problem with bottom end calves. CILDEHS said that exporters reject such low-end calves, and that generally, Irish farmers with a high herd health profile would purchase such calves cheaply and try to fatten them up for sale.

CIWF requested that calves be kept on the agenda to try and get positive ways of moving forward. It was agreed that they would prepare a document with suggestions that could be looked at to see if/what is feasible. Document to be circulated to Council via Secretary.

***Transport***

DAF confirmed that proposals to provide education and training to hauliers and farmers were well advanced. ICOS supported this view.

***Fur Farming***

DAF report was submitted to the Chief Veterinary Officer for forwarding to the Minister. It will be available for the next meeting.

Vet. Irl. confirmed that their report would also be available for the next meeting.

***Broiler Welfare***

The Broiler Welfare Directive has been adopted at EU level. CIWF said that they would have difficulty with the stocking densities agreed. Chair of Education sub-group stated that the ‘Broiler Guidelines’ are well advanced and that the document deals with ‘best practice’ only, not policy. CIWF enquired if footpad scoring could be included?

***Pig Welfare***

See 3 below.

# FARM ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION GUIDELINES

Chair of this sub-group reported that a draft of the *Animal Welfare Guidelines for Transport of Animals* had been circulated to Council and submissions received have been taken on board. The document is ready for printing and a copy will be circulated to Council.

The group proposes to conclude the broiler welfare document, which is to be followed by pigs. The ‘Protocol for Emergency On-farm Slaughter’ is still on the table but cannot be finalised until discussions referred to above have concluded.

# WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)

In the absence of Chair of this sub-group, Secretary read out a report.

A meeting was convened of the Steering-group in April with representatives from the Health Service Executive (HSE), An Garda Síochána, Veterinary Ireland Welfare Division (Vet. Irl. Wel. Div.) and Local Authority Veterinarians (LAV’s) also in attendance. Since the last meeting, the Gardaí had informed their local Superintendents of existence of EWS. It is envisaged that these Superintendents will nominate a Garda in each county with whom EWS can liase. Chair is to write to each EWS group (through DAF contact), requesting them to meet with nominated Garda.

HSE representative has agreed to make contact with various bodies within her organisation and revert re. linking up with EWS at county level. HSE to draft a letter to each HSE representative at county level requesting them to put together an information pack on local services to be supplied to the local EWS groups.

Vet. Irl. Wel. representative agreed to liase with Chair re. getting information on availability of EWS out to Private Veterinary Practitioners.

At Steering-group level, it was agreed that a review of EWS should take place and that Chair would write to each county group requesting a one-page report to contain:

-How is it working

-What are its weaknesses

-Suggestions on how it can be improved

-Repeat offenders – how can they be targeted

-Provide details of no. of cases dealt with (outputs/qualitative research)

-DAF to draw up summary and circulate to Steering Group

Following discussion, it was agreed that Council would invite E O’Flynn, (Vet. Irl. Wel. Div.) to prepare a presentation for Council outlining the legal route to be pursued by all in animal welfare cases.

# HORSE WELFARE

B Bent outlined the detail of a paper prepared by her and S O’Laoide.

Following discussion by Council, it was agreed to establish a sub-group to engage with stakeholders with a view to addressing some of the anomalies outlined in the paper, and report back to Council.

**FUR FARMING**

Dealt with under matters arising.

# EURO FARM ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL

Two meetings have taken place to date, the inaugural meeting on 18th and 19th September, 2006 and the first meeting on 8th and 9th May, 2007.

S O’Laoide represented FAWAC on both occasions and it was formally agreed that he would continue to represent Council at these meetings and report back.

S O’Laoide informed Council that Mr David Pritchard, DEFRA UK, was very impressed with EWS and suggested that an invitation be extended to him to attend a meeting where its operation might be outlined.

# AOB

**Veterinary Medicines**

Vet. Irl. argued that the veterinary medicine Procaine be made available to farmers here in the same way as it is to farmers in the UK. Procaine is not licensed here - but may be imported under special licence for use.

It was agreed that Council support this position. **UCD Animal Welfare Seminar Series**

Chairman congratulated A Hanlon on her series and wished her every success with it.

**Updated photograph of Council**

It was agreed that this would take place at next meeting if all members could be in attendance. **TB Badger Cull**

DAF stated that the Minister for Agriculture and Food had challenged the content of a press release recently issued by Badger Watch UK and Badger Watch Ireland. DAF to provide brief to Council via Secretary.

**Location of Meetings**

It was agreed that meetings be held in Portlaoise where possible.

**TEAGASC – Dairy Herd Research**

Following statement by Dr Boyle that there are no plans by TEAGASC, Moorepark, to continue dairy cowherd welfare research, CIWF asked if Council could write requesting that this research continue. This was agreed.

Chairman thanked all members for their contribution and advised Council that the next meeting is scheduled for 11th July.

# POINTS FOR ACTION FROM THIS MEETING

* Re. Emergency Slaughter - ÌFA to continue to engage with food/meat processing industry and DAF and Vet. Irl. to continue discussions with a view to concluding Protocol.
* DAF to provide brief to Council re. badger cull.
* B Earley to discuss economic research with her TEAGASC colleagues.
* B Earley to prepare briefing for next meeting of Council on her welfare research to-date.
* S O’Laoide to continue to pursue use of Stun Assurance Monitor.`
* S O’Laoide to establish sub-group re. horse welfare to engage with shareholders in horse industry.
* CIWF to circulate details (via Secretary) of CIWF UK/RSPCA veal initiative.
* CIWF to prepare document re. feasibility/means of pursuing better welfare/use of low-end calves. To be circulated to Council via Secretary.
* Secretary to circulate to Council a final version of Animal Welfare Guidelines for Transport of Animals.
* Invitation to issue to E O’Flynn, Vet. Irl. Wel. representative to give a presentation to Council on legal route to be pursued in cases where animal welfare is breached.
* Chairman to write to TEAGASC re. research into dairy herd welfare.