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

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

Date: 19th September 2007.

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), D Ryan (DAF), S Foley (CILDEHS), A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett (CIWF), K Kinsella (IFA), L McCabe (ICMSA), D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), B Earley (TEAGASC), J Bryan (IFA), C Connor (DARDNI),

**Apologies:** S O’Laoide, (Vet. Ireland), M Blake (DAF) represented by G O’Hagan,

T Doyle (ICOS), R Kennedy (IFA), A McCarthy (ISPCA) represented by

M Beazley, R Kennedy, IFA.

**Secretary:** T O’Halloran.

Chairman welcomed everyone and read apologies.

# PRESENTATION

***‘Farm Animal Welfare Case - Legal Route’ by Ms E O'Flynn, Veterinary Ireland.***

It was agreed that presentation would be circulated to Council. Question and answer session followed.

# MINUTES

Minutes adopted with one amendment.

# MATTERS ARISING

None

# ON-FARM SLAUGHTER

DAF stated that this document - now entitled ‘Guidance for Veterinary Practitioners and Farmers on Managing Acutely Injured Livestock On-farm’ was in its final draft. It is hoped to present it to the meat industry later this month and then to Council. It is proposed have it circulated before the next meeting.

With regard to the number of animals disposed of resulting from farm animal welfare cases, DAF advised that figures for the last quarter of 2006/first quarter of 2007 showed that there had been 456 farm visits in total with the following figures relating to 381 of those visits. There was a total of 1,307 animals dead on-farm. 70 were euthanized and 316 seized and disposed of by DAF. DAF had identified 218 serious welfare cases. Some members of Council asked for a further breakdown of details such as location, type of animal, if veterinary practitioner was present, numbers per incident, etc. DAF confirmed that it was introducing a new system called AFIT (**A**griculture **F**ield **I**nspection & **T**esting systems) in January 2008, and that this type of information will be available from it. Chairman suggested that DAF respond further in 2008 when the new system is up and running. DAF agreed to revert to Council with any further details on inspections referred to above.

# ANIMAL WELFARE ECONOMICS

Council received a further presentation entitled *‘Animal Welfare: Economics and Policy’* from Dr Bernadette Earley, TEAGASC. (Copy circulated).

Dr Earley informed Council that research referred to in her July presentation had been submitted to the Animal Welfare Research Journal for peer review.

She advised Council that TEAGASC were working with Veterinary Ireland on a new programme – RMIS (Research Management Information System) to address on-farm herd health. This research will look at BVD/bovine respiratory disease/management procedures with animal husbandry/market concerns.

Dr Earley also informed Council that she had drafted an application to the TEAGASC Walsh Fellowship Schemes to undertake research into herd health/economics/animal welfare. This will target welfare economics from an Irish perspective, initially targeting beef/suckler herds and may include dairy/pigs and sheep.

Following a general discussion, it was agreed that the application would be circulated to Council following approval by the Walsh Fellowship Group TEAGASC.

It was also suggested that Council could invite organic farmer representative groups to give a view on possible higher animal welfare standards in these types of systems versus intensive systems.

# EDUCATION SUB-GROUP

In the absence of the Chair of this group, Secretary updated Council. The broiler welfare guidelines are near completion and would possibly be ready for launching at the next meeting. It was agreed to issue invitation to Minister to launch the *Broiler and Transport Guidelines* publications.

# HORSE WELFARE LIAISON GROUP

B Bent, who sits on this group, updated Council in the absence of the Chair. Key issues were identified and agreed at 20th July meeting. A further meeting will take place on 1st October and it is expected that representatives of Horse Racing Ireland and Horse Sport Ireland will attend, together with Mr Joe Collins PVP who is specialising in equine welfare and currently undertaking research in UCD.

DAF briefed Council on developments taking place within the Department.

Dr A Hanlon informed Council that the UCD seminar in equine welfare would take place in spring 2008 – she will advise members in advance.

# REPORT FROM RITUAL SLAUGHTER GROUP

In the absence of the Chair, Secretary informed Council that following an invitation from DAF, Chair had on 21st July, briefed members of Meat Industry Ireland on the objectives of Council, in their efforts to secure a premises in which to demonstrate the use of the Stun Assurance Monitor. Efforts continue at Local Authority level also.

CIWF stressed that it is very important that FAWAC progresses this matter as there is increasingly more Halal product being produced.

# WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)

Chair of this sub-group reported that a meeting of the Steering group was convened on 5th September to discuss the results of the questionnaire completed by EWS county groups as part of the EWS review. He reported that it was working reasonably well. At present, it operated on an informal basis but there might be a need to formalise it more. EWS will continue to liaise with HSE and the Gardaí. Weaknesses identified include, staff availability / lack of collective approach in some regions / repeat offenders. Issues identified for further consideration include consolidation of interaction between groups at local level / DAF to identify potential animal welfare problems at local level as this is proving effective in county’s where it is undertaken.

Following discussion, it was agreed that EWS has developed tremendously over a short number of years however it has not progressed evenly across the country. Chairman suggested that perhaps a framework could be developed for the benefit of periphery groups such as HSE and the Gardaí.

It was agreed that a paper be put to Council at the next meeting.

# CALF EXPORTS

Council received a brief presentation from Dr Bernadette Earley, TEAGASC entitled ‘*Calf Transport Scientific Literature*

*Summary’* (Copy circulated). CIWF pointed out that their Green Paper relates to calves under six weeks old only. In response to a request from CIWF re. minimising the number of dairy calves being exported, Chairman agreed that Council would keep the item on its list. IFA expressed concern that Council might restrict export of live calves. CIWF stressed that the item is about keeping calves in Ireland and adding value to them in order to maximise their welfare.

Chairman agreed to re-circulate CIWF Green Paper.

# SUCKLER COW WELFARE SCHEME – Incentives to disbud

DAF explained that the emphasis is on early intervention with regard to disbudding and castration. A general discussion took place on the legal framework / availability of veterinary medicines including anaesthetics / issues concerning the administration of Procaine / administration of painkillers after effects of aesthetic has worn off.

Vet. Irl. representative stated that the UK prescribed disbudding period is 2-3 weeks – over that period required the use of an anaesthetic. With the proper availability of anaesthetics, disbudding can take place at 6 weeks – a horn can easily be detected by that stage and he appealed to DAF to include this as part of the scheme.

Under the scheme, calves must be disbudded within a two to three week period. Legislation allows for disbudding within the first two weeks without anaesthetic. CIWF asked if it was possible to include as ‘Best Practice’ under the scheme, the use of anaesthetic for disbudding in the first two weeks.

Chair asked that Council be briefed by DAF at the next meeting.

# FUR FARMING

Council agreed Terms of Reference for the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW), following a decision at it’s last meeting, to submit the two fur reports (produced by Veterinary Ireland and the DAF respectively) to SACAHW for a view.

CIWF expressed concern at the use of electrocution as a method of slaughter of foxes, considering it unacceptable even under veterinary supervision. During discussions, serious concern was expressed by a number of members about this practice and suggested that a more humane method of slaughter should be encouraged. Chairman requested DAF to convey these concerns to the Minister. DAF agreed.

Chairman asked that it also be conveyed to SACAHW that an urgent response is needed with regard to the two reports.

# AOB

***FAWAC Webpage***

It was agreed that this would be looked at with a view to updating it.

***Electrocution of Foxes***

Dealt with at 11 above.

***Next meeting***

The next meeting is scheduled for 28th November. Secretary to ascertain if Minister is available to launch recent Council publications. Depending on date that Minister is available; meeting may have to be re-scheduled.