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

**Venue:** The Merrion Hotel, Upper Merrion Street, Dublin 2.

Date: 20th February 2008.

Present: Professor Patrick Fottrell (Chairman), Brid Farrell (DAFF), Garry O’Hagan (DAFF), Sean O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), Stephen Foley (CILDEHS), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Mary-Anne Bartlett (CIWF), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Dominic Cronin (ICMSA), John Bryan (IFA), Colette Connor (DARDNI), Michael Doran (IFA), Tom Doyle (ICOS), Angela McCarthy (ISPCA), Dermot Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), Dr. Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC).

**Apologies:** Dermot Ryan (DAFF)), Martin Blake (DAFF), Lorcan McCabe (ICMSA).

**Secretary:** Tom Farrell.

Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Michael Doran (IFA) who is replacing John Bryan as a Council member.

# MINUTES

Minutes of the meeting of 28th November 2007 adopted with an amendment by CIWF, who had stated that all animals should be stunned before slaughter.

# MATTERS ARISING

None

# ON-FARM SLAUGHTER

DAFF presented a draft document - entitled ‘Guidance for Veterinary Practitioners and Farmers on Managing Acutely Injured Livestock On-farm’, which will be put on the agenda for discussion at the next meeting. IFA along with ICMSA and Veterinary Ireland are to contact MII regarding obtaining their agreement to accept such animals at meat export plants DAFF stated that legislative changes were necessary before a protocol could become operable.

In relation to an incident involving a truck carrying pigs overturning, DAFF stated that guidelines are being prepared on how to deal with similar situations in the future. Concern was raised regarding the slaughter of pigs particularly use of pithing. DAFF stated it was aware of this issue and was looking into the matter with the pig industry.

#  ANIMAL WELFARE ECONOMICS

Dr. Bernadette Earley confirmed that the ‘Linking Economics with Farm Animal Welfare’ would be a three-year research programme. An application has been drafted along with a herd health initiative and she will know by May if the application has been successful. Dr Earley also stated that there is ongoing research in Teagasc, Grange in relation to this matter. DAFF referred to its herd health initiative, which will deal with non-regulated diseases in a comprehensive manner.

#  EDUCATION SUB-GROUP

The Chairman of this group stated that the Broiler Welfare Guidelines are near completion. There is an out standing issue in relation to the Catchers with regard to whose responsibility it is on issues of hygiene, health and safety etc. The document will be circulated for approval at the next Council meeting. Following completion of the Broiler Welfare Guidelines, welfare guidelines for pig farmers will be prepared.

# EQUINE WELFARE LIAISON GROUP

Representatives from the Irish Thoroughbred Breeders Association and Weatherby’s Ireland, were invited to attend a recent meeting of this group to discuss the issue of horse welfare and particularly identification and registration of equines. The main concerns were disease and the lack of traceability.

Presently there is insufficient identification and registration in place for equines. Council agreed to await the draft Animal Health and Welfare Bill as this may resolve some concerns. There was discussion on the need for a national database to keep track of all equines as this assists in regulating their disposal. Reference was also made to Sulky racing and the large number of complaints received, particularly from tourists. Council also enquired about availability of statistics relating to numbers of equines exported for slaughter. As there is only one equine slaughtering plant in Ireland it is felt that a large number of equines are exported for slaughter. A paper will be prepared by The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, UCD on this issue for presentation to FAWAC.

DAFF stated that they are working on an identification process for equines, firstly at marts and ports. If unregistered equines are found they will not be allowed to travel. DAFF reported that since this initiative has commenced there has been a significant increase in registration of equines.

# REPORT FROM RITUAL SLAUGHTER GROUP

Veterinary Ireland has had discussions with MII, on the preparation of the slaughter welfare document. Some of the previous points suggested by FAWAC, which may be included in the document are - training of operators in stunning and responsibility on stakeholders to ensure that stunning is in use. Reference was made to the current review at EU Commission level of the Slaughter Directive 93/119/EC and the fact that current legislation establishes a derogation in that there is a protocol on welfare for certain religious practices and the intention is not to remove this protocol. Other issues to be considered in the review are competence of personnel and standard operating procedures.

In order to advance the matter of adapting use of stunning before slaughter, The Islamic Cultural Centre Dublin (ICCD) will be attending a domestic plant in Offaly shortly, following which Veterinary Ireland will progress the matter with the ICCD. In view of the sensitive nature of this issue, Council agreed to await the findings of the sub-group of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW) and the outcome of Veterinary Ireland’s demonstration of stunning before slaughter prior to further deliberation on the matter. Chairman thanked Veterinary Ireland for its work in this area

# WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)

DAFF referred to the EWS, which is working satisfactorily throughout the country, although there is still an issue with regard to repeat offenders. Contact was made with An Garda Siocháná in relation to having liaison officers assigned for each Garda Divisional Area and a similar approach has been made to the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Veterinary Ireland. DAFF also stated that there will be a review of the EWS in the spring. In response to a question from Council on availability of a database on welfare cases, DAFF confirmed that work is progressing on establishing such a database

# CALF EXPORTS

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF) presented a booklet entitled “Beyond Calf Exports Stakeholders Forum” a United Kingdom based booklet following which there was a discussion in relation to health and welfare issues of calves that are being exported and it was recommended that Dr. Bernadette Earley present a report on this matter at a later date.

# SUCKLER COW WELFARE SCHEME

DAFF stated that with regard to disbudding of calves there are two anaesthetic products (Willcain and Adrenacaine) on the market, which are procaine-based products. These are available as prescription only medicines (POM), which can be dispensed on the basis of a prescription and administered by the herdowner in accordance with that prescription. There are six companies currently licensed to import and distribute these products. It was suggested that local anaesthetics be used for castration as well as disbudding.

Teagasc and Veterinary Ireland will set up a program for training of farmers on administration of the anaesthetic. IFA stated that there is excellent interest and participation from farmers in the recently announced Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme.

# FUR FARMING

1. Council is awaiting the findings of the sub-group of the SACAHW and the Chairman expressed urgency on the matter and said he expects to have a report available for Council’s next meeting.

# 12. AOB

Agriculture Field Inspection and Testing (AFIT)

DAFF stated that the AFIT system is continually being rolled out and it is hoped to add more modules to the system in the future.

**FAWAC Web page**

The Secretary stated that he is reviewing the FAWAC website.

**Animal Health and Welfare Bill**

DAFF stated that a description of the draft Bill will be posted on the DAFF website and comments invited from interested organisations and possibly follow up meetings with selected organisations. DAFF also undertook to give a presentation of the Bill at the April meeting of Council if possible.

DARDNI stated that the Northern Ireland Diseases of Animals Bill would be published shortly. The purpose of the Bill is to update controls on the prevention and control of animal and poultry diseases and to take account of the latest developments in research and technology to trace and combat disease. The Bill was circulated on 7 January 2008 for consultation with stakeholders and other interested organisations and individuals. DARDNI officials are engaging with the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development on the detail of the Bill.

**Next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for the 30th April 2008.

## Conclusion

Chairman wrote to Teresa O’Halloran on behalf of FAWAC, thanking her for her work as secretary of the Council. Teresa replied and thanked members for their co-operation during her tenure and wished FAWAC well in the future. Chairman thanked John J Bryan (IFA), at his last meeting and acknowledged his contribution to the Council, he wished him well in the future. Chairman welcomed his replacement, Mr Michael Doran. Mr Bryan in response thanked FAWAC for its excellent work on all issues and wished the Council well in the future.

**Launch by Minister Mary Coughlan, TD of the Guideline Booklet “Best Practice for the Welfare of Animals during Transport”**

At the conclusion of the Council meeting, Minister Coughlan launched the Guideline Booklet “Best Practice for the Welfare of Animals during Transport”. In a short address to Council, the Minister thanked the chairman, Professor Patrick Fottrell, and the members of the Council, particularly the Education Sub-Group for their work in producing the transport guidelines, which follow in a series of other publications relating to various aspects of animal welfare. The Minister also expressed her appreciation of the ongoing and very valuable work being done by the Council and for the advice provided.

## END