# Minutes of the Thirty-second Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

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

Date: 17th September 2008.

Present: Professor Patrick Fottrell (Chairman), Brid Farrell (DAFF), Sean O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), Stephen Foley (CILDEHS), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Mary-Anne Bartlett (CIWF), Michael Doran (IFA), Mark Beazley (ISPCA), Dermot Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), Niall O’Nuallain (DAFF), Tom Doyle (ICOS), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Margaret Murray (TEAGASC).

**Apologies:** Dr. Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC), Colette Connor (DARDNI) and Martin Blake (DAFF).

**Secretary:** Tom Farrell.

The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting.

# MINUTES

The minutes with amendments were agreed.

# MATTERS ARISING

Mary-Anne Bartlett asked that the minutes reflect, the issue of tail docking in pigs was raised by her on behalf of CIWF, Mary-Anne also requested for DAFF to provide figures of pigs that is tail docked.

# Fur Farming

A working-group to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW) presented a report on “Welfare aspects of the slaughter of fur producing animals in Ireland”. The Chairman welcomed the report and acknowledged the considerable amount of work undertaken by the Chairman, Albert Costelloe together with the other members of the working-group in compiling the comprehensive report and on behalf of Council, expressed his thanks and appreciation to the group in producing the report.

There was a general discussion on the report particularly on the recommendations contained therein. While Council members gave a general support to the Report, Chairman did acknowledge that as the report had only been presented, members might wish to consult further with their respective organisations before giving final agreement to the Report. The Secretary asked Council members, to email him with any queries, they may have on the Report.

1. **Review of On-farm slaughter**

Members of Council stated that there was a need for urgency on getting the national legislation (Statutory Instrument (SI)) enacted to deal with the new arrangements on ‘Guidance for Veterinary Practitioners and Farmers on managing acutely injured livestock on farm” booklet. Once the information leaflet is published, there will be a time factor involved in dissemination and awareness of the contents of the new arrangements.

DAFF in response said it is anxious to finalise the arrangements and put procedures in place to notify farmers and other interested parties on the matter. The issue of the SI will be followed up with the relevant DAFF division.

1. **Report from Education Sub-group**

The Chairman of the Education Working-group stated that progress has been made in drafting the next guideline booklet on a “Code of practice for the Welfare of Pigs”. He also stated that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) has recently issued the last in a series of three Scientific Opinions concerning the welfare of farmed pigs. The three reports should be of significant help when drafting the booklet.

1. **Report from Equine Welfare Sub-group**

Council spoke about the current issues relating to Equine Welfare. There is an apparent lack of demand for equines at mart sales and a rise in numbers been abandoned. The majority of calls to the welfare organisations currently relate to Equine issues. The reluctance on the part of owners to euthanase old horses is posing problems. Under current legislation, owners need a passport/licence to slaughter in factories, which is a cause for some horses not being presented at factory. There maybe some weaknesses, Council believes, in the system of micro chipping.

Council also spoke about suggested measures that might help:

* Need for a once off cull of horses
* Need to interact with stakeholders in relation to current issues, e.g.
  + Horse Sport Ireland
  + Horse Racing Ireland
  + Factories
  + DAFF
* ISPCA may need support from DAFF to deal with issues envisaged
* A scheme of euthanasia to deal with welfare compromised horses

DAFF stated that they are generally encouraged by the compliance level at the upper end of the industry, however other areas of the industry need more encouragement to comply with horse welfare. While there maybe a need also for more enforcement of the law in regards to welfare issues, there is, nevertheless, currently a lot of work on going in the area and this will continue. Council decided that the ‘Equine Welfare Liaison Working-group’, should approach the industry, with a view to dealing with current issues on Equine Welfare.

1. **Report from Ritual Slaughter Sub-group**

Veterinary Ireland stated that while the Slaughter Plant scheduled to facilitate the demonstration of the Stun Assurance Monitor (SAM) remains closed, the new owner did indicate that the Plant may facilitate a demonstration of the SAM in due course. Veterinary Ireland will pursue the issue with the new owners.

The Secretary stated that the SACAHW Committee would endeavour to have a working-group formed, to deal with the welfare of animals during Ritual Slaughter.

1. **Report from the Working Group on Early Warning System for Animal Welfare Cases (EWS)**

DAFF provided an up date on EWS as follows:

* Garda Liaison officers have been nominated from all districts with the exception of Co Wicklow. DAFF is following up on the matter with the Garda Station concerned.
* A further review of the EWS is being initiated and circular letter is to issue to DVOs in the matter
* Contacts points continue to be progressed with the HSE
* The next round of EWS regional meetings are being organised
* In the course of the recent Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) Audit on evaluation of animal welfare controls, the FVO Team commented very positively on the EWS initiative. The team was impressed with the unique collaborative approach between all parties involved in dealing with welfare-compromised animals on farms.

The issue of deploying additional resources to the EWS was raised and it was suggested that issue could be examined in the context of the forthcoming review. Council also recommended that we explore ways of seeking funding from sources outside of DAFF e.g. from the agric food/dairy companies. Council acknowledged the assistance (particularly in the form of emergency fodder) provided by the IFA to farmers having difficulty in managing their herds.

There was a discussion on the issue of repeat offenders as they pose an on-going problem. DAFF accept that these cases are by their nature time consuming but are being constantly monitored. The forthcoming Animal Health and Welfare Bill will address this issue more forcefully. Council stated that vigilance is needed over the coming winter months, in regards to welfare cases because of the poor summer, which may result in fodder shortages in some areas.

## AOB

# Food and Veterinary Office (FVO) mission

DAFF gave a briefing on the recent FVO mission, which took place from 8th September to 12th September. The purpose of the mission was to evaluate animal welfare controls on farms, during transport and at the time of slaughter. The audit focussed on how Ireland implements the legislation on all three aspects.

DAFF informed the FVO team on the FAWAC and EWS initiatives. DAFF also provided the team with the welfare guidelines produced by the Education Sub-group. In general the Team were very impressed with the contribution FAWAC makes in the area of animal welfare.

# Calf Transport

CIWF raised concerns on haulers who are failing to comply with the transport legislation regarding stops at lairage points in France. CIWF has sent a formal complaint to DAFF, in relation to this issue. A discussion ensued amongst Council members. DAFF reassured Council that, they take these complaints very seriously, and are following up on the CIWF correspondence, and the recent FVO mission, also covered animal welfare during transport.

# Global Warning

A discussion took place in relation to Global Warming and how it may affect the Irish landscape. It was decided, as the Council’s Agenda is full for this year, the matter can be dealt with on next year programme of work.

# Applied Ethology

Council commended UCD and particularly Dr Alison Hanlon (member of FAWAC) on recently hosting a very successful international conference in Dublin. The annual conference of ISAE (International Society for Applied Ethology) was held in UCD Belfield in August 2008.

# Animal Health and Welfare Bill

DAFF reported on the Animal Health and Welfare Bill. Following the public consultation process initiated earlier in the year on the draft bill, almost 400 submissions/comments were received containing wide-ranging observations and these are now being examined. A number of those who contacted the Department asked that they be given an opportunity to expand further on their submissions before finalisation of the draft legislation and these request are now being examined. When this further consultation process is concluded arrangements will then be made to draft the legislation having regard to all comments received.

Launch by Minister Brendan Smith, TD of the Guidelines Booklet “Code of Practice for the Welfare of Broiler Chickens”

At the conclusion of the Council meeting, Minister Smith launched the Guidelines Booklet “Code of Practice for the Welfare of Broiler Chickens”. 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 his appreciation of the ongoing and very valuable work being done by the Council and for the advice provided.

## Next meeting

The next Council meeting is on the 26th November 2008.

## Conclusion

Chairman thanked the Council Members for their attendance, and adjourned the meeting.

## END