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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 9th September 2009

Present: Professor P Fottrell (Chairman), H McMahon (DAFF), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), L O’Flynn (Vet Ireland), A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett (CIWF), M Doran (IFA), T Doyle (ICOS), B Earley (TEAGASC), N Byers (ICMSA), J Holohan (ISPCA), C Connor (DARDNI), G O’Hagan (DAFF)

Apologies: S Foley (CILDEHS), M Blake (DAFF)

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

The chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting and issued a warm welcome to Elizabeth O’Flynn (Vet Ireland) and John Holohan (ISPCA). The Chairman also welcomed Alan P O’Brien who Council was advised is replacing Tom Farrell as Secretary to FAWAC. The Chairman wished to thank Tom for all his work within FAWAC and to wish him well in his new role.

# Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 29th April 2009 adopted with two amendments.

# 2. Matters Arising

# 3. Review of Animal Welfare Guidelines for Managing Acutely Injured Livestock on Farm

DAFF informed the council that this booklet has been circulated to all registered veterinary practitioners, DVOs and slaughter plants as well as being available through the FAWAC website. The booklet will be launched by the minister on the 17th of September and slaughter plants will have all the information necessary to process these animals at this point.

The Chairman thanked all those involved in producing this booklet for their hard work and suggested that a representative from the IFA, the ISPCA and Vet Ireland should attend the launch.

# 4. Approval of the booklet on the Code Of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs

Chairman of the Education Sub-Committee Mr Sean O’Laoide advised that a draft booklet had been circulated and a number of suggestions have been received. Some of these have been included while others could not be agreed to. CIWF questioned whether the issue of Environmental Enrichment has been dealt with in enough detail. Sean O’Laoide said that the booklet deals with this issue. He emphasised that this document is about best practice and we must be very aware of the tone. We do not want it to become an enforcement document with a biased view suggesting that things are not being done properly. While enrichment is important, it would be dangerous to say that it is a major solution when more research is required. The booklet stresses that further research on this issue is needed in a specific Irish context. The Chairman made the point that while the EFSA report was a general study, a specific Irish study is needed. CIWF said EFSA identifies enrichment materials that comply with legislation.

Collette Connor told the Council that Niamh O’Connell has done great research on this issue in an Irish (all-Ireland) context. CIWF asked if Niamh O’Connell could make a presentation to FAWAC on this. It was agreed to approach her prior to the next FAWAC meeting.

Alison Hanlon questioned whether the booklet should be advocating the use of electric goads in a ‘Best Practice’ booklet. S O’Laoide stated that many pig farmers in Ireland use electric goads, so we need to advise them how best to use them. It was agreed that it should be qualified that these goads are not recommended.

CIWF expressed concern that the document does not make the law clear enough. Sean O’Laoide said that the legislation is included in the Appendix. It was agreed to insert the line ‘Refer to the Appendix’ to make this clear.

The Chairman added that he would like to thank everybody involved in producing the booklet and hoped that it will be finalised and launched shortly.

# 5. Report on the Working Group

***on the Early Warning and intervention System for Animal Welfare Cases (EWS)***

DAFF reported that a program has been set up in a number of regions with a community based approach to welfare issues. Before the involvement of the HSE, a farmer with welfare issues will first be approached by somebody in the local community group. These schemes are up and running in Wexford, Offaly, Mayo, Sligo, Leitrim and Monaghan.

All members expressed concerns about the coming winter. The bad summer has produced a massive shortage of fodder. Farmers who have never been in financial trouble before may face it this year and need to be made aware of the EWS. Problem cases need to be identified early and help given before they escalate.

DAFF stated that regional meetings have been arranged for October and this point will be stressed heavily at these meetings.

Garry O’Hagan stated that vets need to be heavily involved as they see local farmers more than anybody. The EWS relies on local knowledge to identify problem cases.

ISPCA questioned whether the IFA could identify banks of fodder that could be used in an emergency. The IFA stated that there are no banks of fodder available. However cheap grain is available.

# 6. Report from the Education Working Group

Work has been completed on the Pig Welfare Booklet. The next project is a booklet on the welfare of Laying Hens.

# 7. Equine Welfare Group

The Chaiman of the sub-committee explained that there is an ongoing problem with the issue of horse welfare in this country. Food and land is scarce and there is a need to dispose of thousands of horses. Factories to carry this out are scarce although more are coming online. Disposal is also expensive and people don’t want to be associated with it.

There is also an issue with horses over six months old who don’t have passports. These are then ineligible for the food chain and the owner can therefore make no money from their disposal. Joe Collins has mentioned the possibility of a derogation that would allow these animals to be registered. It was agreed that this option should be explored. However Garry O’Hagan stressed that there is not much of a market for horse meat at present.

The ISPCA advised that they are having ongoing positive meetings with the horse industry. However they have legal cases coming up in September involving 120-150 horses in one case and 300 in another. They do not have the capacity to cope with the seizure of that many horses.

It was agreed by all that a formal plan is needed to tackle the horse welfare situation in order to get more groups involved. Private funding is needed and the horse industry must be approached for this.

The Chairman stated that a letter will be drafted to former minister Joe Walsh on this issue.

ISPCA advised that action is required as foreign media are taking an interest in this issue and it could be very damaging for Ireland as a whole.

Joe Collins is to give a presentation to the next FAWAC Council meeting on this issue.

# 8. Slaughter of Fur Animals

CIWF expressed concern that the new EU Directive doesn’t allow many changes to present practice and expressed her opinion that recommendations from the report by the Scientific Advisory Committee on fur farming should be implemented by the minister.

DAFF said that the new regulations will not be published until 2013. DAFF have given a copy of the recommendations to the Irish Fur Breeders Association (IFBA) and asked if it would be possible to give them a copy of the entire report. There were no objections to this and it was agreed that the Secretary would approach Prof Monaghan about this. However DAFF pointed out that once an industry complies with legislation it is a voluntary decision to take recommendations on board.

Sean O’Laoide added that training and standard operating procedures are positive aspects of the new directive.

The Chairman said that Fur Farming will be dealt with under AOB at future FAWAC Council meetings.

# 9. Slaughter Without Stunning.

Good progress is being made with slaughter plants in the midlands. They have agreed to do post cutting of cattle. A demonstration needs to be organised for the Islamic Cultural Centre. The owner of the slaughterhouse is happy to demonstrate this procedure.

CIWF asked if safeguards can be put in place to ensure stunning of some description is carried out. Sean O’Laoide replied that this needs to be examined and Meat Industry Ireland will need to look into it. CIWF said that the new EU Slaughter Regulation allows additional safeguards for religious slaughter, and the SACAHW report could look at this.

# 10. AOB

**10.1:** DAFF told the Council that the Animal Health and Welfare Bill is moving forward in a positive manner.

**10.2:** DARDNI told the Council that their minister wants their Animal Welfare Bill in the Assembly by June 2010 along with a Dog Control Bill that would put more emphasis on the dog owner through increased licence fees and penalties.

**10.3:** The next meeting of the FAWAC Council will take place on the 11th of November. The Secretary will contact all members to inform them of the venue.

Chairman thanked all for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

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