# Minutes of the Forty-Third Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 26th May 2011

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, B Farrell (DAFF), B Earley (TEAGASC), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), N Griffin (ISPCA), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), A Hanlon (UCD), M A Bartlett (CIWF), L O’Flynn (Vet Ireland), R Doyle (ICOS), B Bent (WSPCA), S Foley (CILDEHS), M Blake (DAFF), M Doran (IFA),

Apologies: C Connor (DARDNI), N Byers (ICMSA),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 24th February 2011 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* The Chairman congratulated Minister Simon Coveney TD on his appointment and wished him well in his new role. An invitation was also extended to the Minister to attend a FAWAC meeting in the future.
* Sean O’Laoide put forward some possible candidates from the EuroFAWC conference to speak to the Council on the Economic Aspect of Animal Welfare. DAFF agreed to look into this further.
* The IFA re-iterated its concerns regarding the FAWAC Guideline/Code of Practice booklets forming part of legislation. The Chairman re-iterated that these Booklets are Recommendations of Best Practice and are not legal instruments and are drafted by FAWAC, which is an advisory and not a statutory body. Sean O’Laoide added that all Guideline Booklets are qualified by a disclaimer stressing that they are not legal instruments. DAFF said that while SI 311 of 2010 on the Welfare of Farmed Animals mentions that the Minister may cause to publish or adopt Codes of Practice, non-compliance with these Codes is not in itself an offence. Non-compliance with the law is the offence. The IFA said that if these Guideline Booklets were to become part of legislation in the future, it would need to know the implications of this. Chairman said that if it is Department policy to include FAWAC Code of Practice Guideline Booklets in future legislation e.g. in the context of the new animal health and welfare bill, in those circumstances the FAWAC Council will need to be consulted. There has been no consultation thus far.
* Regarding the industry response to the Code of Practice on the Welfare of Pigs the Secretary explained that a letter had issued to the IFA and he is currently awaiting a response, which will be circulated.

# Education Working Group

* Sean O’Laoide explained that the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Laying Hens has been completed and should be ready to launch in the near future.
* The Council agreed that the next Guideline Booklet would be a Code of Practice for the Welfare of Horses at Fairs and Markets.
* On the issue of introducing an Animal Welfare module into the school curriculum, the Secretary explained that he had spoken with Vanessa Woods, the Executive Director of Agri-Aware, who had expressed enthusiasm about the idea. Agri-Aware are already active in Primary Schools raising awareness of farming and agriculture, and its importance, among children. It also produces Agricultural Science Study Guides which appear in the Farmer’s Journal.
* Ms Woods agreed that the Animal Welfare programme should concentrate on Secondary Schools. Ms Woods suggested that this subject should be tackled in a Practical sense rather than a class based module as it is important that the students can visualise what they are being taught. She provided a number of suggestions as to how this could be approached.
* CIWF said it provides teaching resources to schools, including videos, teaching activities and packs and information booklets and asked that its material be included in the animal welfare module being developed for schools. UCD emphasised that it is important to ensure that any programme being developed achieves stated objectives and presents a balanced view reflecting the overall view of Council. The Council agreed with this. It was decided that the methodology would be decided first. The content would then be decided by the FAWAC Education Working Group. CIWF requested to be on Education Working Group.
* The Council agreed that in the first instance a formal approach should be made to Agri-Aware and that Ms Woods should be invited to make a presentation on the animal welfare module to the next Council meeting in September.
* CIWF requested that they be represented on the Education Working Group in the future.

# Early Warning System

* DAFF said that a paper is being finalised detailing the work of the EWS initiative to date and its future aims.
* Co-operation is continuing at local regional level. A proposed meeting of the North-West Regional Group is scheduled to take place over the summer.

# Equine Welfare

* The ISPCA highlighted concerns over the high number of equine related calls it has received so far in 2011.
* DAFF said that there have been improvements and increased efficiencies in the implementation of the Control of Horses Act particularly with regard to length of time allowed for reclaiming horses – generally five days - and on increased emphasis in humane disposal of unclaimed horses. A strategy/protocol on more effective implementation of the Control of Horses Act 1996 is under discussion with the Local Authorities. Department Veterinary Inspectors are also assisting the Gardai Siochana in enforcing equine legislation at the Smithfield Horse Fair.
* The Council agreed that effective enforcement of Equine identification is necessary to protect health and welfare of equines. The industry has indicated its willingness to organise identification clinics.

# AOB

* Ritual Slaughter

Sean O’Laoide said that there had been a number of presentations on this at EuroFAWC. It is reported that the meat industry in New Zealand (a major exporting country) has taken a unified initiative in respect of Halal slaughter where collectively they accommodate Halal slaughter to the extent that they comply with two significant elements of such slaughter – (i) the killing box faces Mecca and (ii) the slaughter in undertaken by a ‘religious’ person, however all animals are pre-stunned.  FAWAC asked that DAFF might raise this issue with MII – to establish its views on such an approach and see whether they would be minded to undertake such an initiative.

It is understood that the EU Commission have set up a stakeholder Group to look at this issue.

Elizabeth O’Flynn said that the British Veterinary Association have re-enforced their opposition to slaughter without stunning and believe there should be compulsory labelling of meat from animals slaughtered without stunning. CIWF said that the FVO General Audit had identified, in Ireland, that the derogation for slaughter without stunning was being used for animals not sold for religious purposes and that animals slaughtered for Halal market were being sold to the non Halal market. CIWF sought Department views on this matter.

* Fur Farming

CIWF asked if the recommendations from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare on ‘Welfare aspects of the slaughter of fur producing animals in Ireland’ have been conveyed to the Minister. DAFF explained that the issue is being dealt with in the context of the commitment to phase out of fur farming in the Programme for Government 2009.

Reference was also made to the European Fur Breeders Association (EFBA) who dispute some of these findings in the report, particularly with regard to the slaughter methods themselves and the report, in the EFBAs view does not include any scientific references that it can comment upon.

* Transport
  + CIWF expressed concern on rest periods for Irish calves at Cherbourg. DAFF said that this issue is being pursued.
  + Bernadette Earley said that EFSA have a full report on animal welfare during transport. Overall it is fairly positive in a scientific sense. This will be circulated to Council.
  + The IFA stressed the need to maintain a positive progressive live trade industry with a high welfare standard.
* The Chairman wished to express his thanks and that of the Council to Elizabeth O’Flynn for all her work on the Council and with Animal Welfare in general.

**END**