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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 2nd April 2012

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, N O’Nuallain (DAFM), B Farrell (DAFM), B Earley (TEAGASC), N Griffin (ISPCA), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), A Hanlon (UCD), M A Bartlett (CIWF), R Doyle (ICOS), B Bent (WSPCA), C Connor (DARDNI), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), M Doran (IFA),

Apologies: S Foley (CILDEHS), N Byers (ICMSA),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of last Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 1st December 2011 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* The IFA reminded Council of the importance of dealing with the issue of Acutely Injured Animals on farms which is a significant issue for farmers particularly on account of the value of cattle.
* CIWF asked for an update on the Fur Farming Review. DAFM said that the report is due to be completed shortly.

# Education Working Group

* Sean O’Laoide provided an update on the progress on the latest welfare booklet being drafted i.e. Code of Practice on Equine Fairs, Marts and Markets. Both the Donkey Sanctuary and ICOS made presentations to the Group and the booklet should be finalised shortly.
* Contact with Agri-Aware is ongoing. The Secretary will contact Dr Woods formally to progress matters.
* UCD mentioned that Norway has published a booklet for schools and suggested that it may be worthwhile for Council to examine the booklet in order to elicit information which might be of value.

# EWS

* DAFM said that reports for recent weeks have been positive. Reported welfare incidences are down and co-operation has been positive between all parties. DAFM are continuing to monitor ‘at-risk herds’ and the Department has introduced enhanced procedures for reporting of suspected cases of animal cruelty/distress.   A dedicated e-mail address and helpline is now operating in the Department for members of the public to report incidents of animal cruelty. The ISPCA said that there had been positive feedback on the helpline.
* UCD said that it is undertaking welfare research and has been working with a social scientist interviewing farmers, Veterinary Practitioners etc. It is hoped to publish the results shortly. The Chairman asked that UCD make a presentation to the council when research is complete.

# Equine Welfare

* DAFM gave an update on Equine Premises Registration. With effect from May 2012 – there is a requirement to register any premises in which a horse is kept either on full or part time basis. The new system enables DAFM to have information on the location of horses and their contacts with other horses in the event of a disease outbreak. All those involved in Equine activities including farmers, stud farms, horse dealers etc have been made aware of the legislation.
* A Protocol between the Department and Local Authorities which aims to provide guidelines and recommendations for more efficient operation of activities under the Control of Horses Act is nearing completion.
* The Irish Equine Centre has also completed a demographic survey of unwanted horses in Ireland 2005–2010.
* The ISPCA and the IFA raised issues of horses without passports and position on slaughtering.

# EuroFAWC

* DAFM recently hosted the 7th meeting of EuroFAWC which was a great success.
* EuroFAWC has been identified as a key stakeholder by the EU Commission.
* A presentation was made at the conference on Unnecessary Suffering regarding a regeneration project in Holland.
* CIWF made a presentation on Dairy Cow Welfare.
* Sean O’Laoide, Vet Ireland gave a presentation on the Dog Breeding Establishments Act.
* Sean O’Laoide reported that Ireland would be considered to be in the upper echelons of animal welfare generally.

# AOB

Welfare Economics

* The Chairman raised the issue of animal welfare economics. UCD said that Freedom Foods recently issued a report on an increase in welfare friendly egg production. The IFA said that it is important to establish how the changeover to enriched cages on 1st January 2012 impacted on the egg sector. It would be regrettable in the IFA’s view if a move to welfare friendly conditions simply led to product being displaced by increased imports from systems with lower animal welfare standards, then this is counter-productive. DAFM pointed out that Ireland has still a similar number of laying hens as it had before the changeover.

Animal Health and Welfare Bill

* DAFM reported that the Bill is ready for publication and will go to the Senate in May.

Acutely Injured Animals on Farm

* Vet Ireland reported that a meeting of stakeholders was convened to discuss the issue of acutely injured animals on farm.
* A number of abattoirs are accepting these animals with one plant looking to develop a system of dealing with these animals over a wider area. However, it is accepted that there is a problem with bull-beef. Local Authority abattoirs do not have the capacity to deal with these larger carcasses. Also, the market for this meat in Ireland is limited and the requirement for the National Health Mark is impeding matters.
* The UK, Austria and France have systems in place for dealing with injured animals on farm.
* The IFA are exploring the possibility of using ‘an ambulance type system’, such a system would require a multidisciplinary approach between veterinary and engineering staff in UCD.
* DAFM said that housing/handling (particularly bull beef systems) conditions on farms need to be examined in an effort to reduce on-farm injuries. Also it must be recognised that the economic worth of an injured but otherwise health animal on farm is reduced. Council welcomed the research work in this area being carried out by Teagasc, Grange.
* CIWF expressed concern about the transport of unfit animals.

Slaughter without Stunning

* CIWF raised the issue of including provisions in upcoming legislation to prevent the number of excess animals being slaughtered in this manner or to include a requirement for post-cut stunning. DAFM said that this can be considered.
* CIWF asked if the FAWAC Council could explore the possibility of meeting with MII to discuss this issue, the Chairman said that this could be discussed at the next meeting.

Laying Hens FVO Audit

* DAFM reported that the FVO audit carried out in March 2012 on welfare of laying henswas extremely positive.
* DARD reported that the UK is now in compliance.

Tail Docking of Cows

* UCD sought clarification on legitimacy of tail docking in view of a recent Ear to the Ground Programme which clearly showed dairy cows with tails docked. DAFM said that policy is to implement the ban on tail docking. There have been cross compliance sanctions. The IFA said that they would follow this up with its members.

Transport

* CIWF said that a recent Animal Angels report identified problems at Cherbourg, France relating to Irish cattle.

Sow Housing

* CIWF asked if Ireland will be compliant. DAFM said that Ireland is currently 44% compliant and working towards achieving full compliance but there are challenges in meeting the deadline.
* DAFM and the IFA raised awareness of financial problems facing the industry which is creating difficulties for farmers.

FAWAC Ten Year Review

* The Chairman suggested that a full review should be written up of the achievements of FAWAC over this period.

Garry O’Hagan SSVI

* The Chairman wished to extend the thanks of the Council to Garry O’Hagan SSVI, following his recent retirement, for his work with FAWAC over the years and particularly for his contribution to the EWS Committee over the years and to wish him the very best in his retirement.

END