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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 13th September 2012

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, Brid Farrell (DAFM), Stephanie Ronan (DAFM), Noel Griffin (ISPCA), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Mary-Anne Bartlett (CIWF), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Stephan Foley (CILDEHS), Arthur O’Connor (Veterinary Ireland), John O’Rourke (Veterinary Ireland)

Apologies: Nigel Byers (ICMSA), Michael Doran (IFA), Bernie Earley (TEAGASC), Sean O’Laoide (Veterinary Ireland), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Colette Connor (DARDNI),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of last Meeting

* The Minutes of the meeting on the 13th of June 2012 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* The IFA raised a concern over the progression of the Acutely Injured Animals issue. It was agreed to discuss this under AOB.

# Education Working Group

* The Secretary reported that the Chairman of the Education Sub-Group Mr Sean O’Laoide will circulate a copy of the booklet on Code of Practice for Equine Marts, Markets and Fairs to the Council in the near future.
* The Secretary reported that a meeting had taken place with Agri-Aware, who would like FAWAC to become patrons of Agri-Aware. Sean O’Laoide had recommended that the Council should agree to this as it is important to find new ways to get the message of Welfare into the public domain.
* The Chairman suggested that Dr Vanessa Woods could submit a short report on the progress of Agri-Aware’s Education programme and the position of Welfare within this.
* The Council agreed that it would support Agri-Aware’s attempt to get the Department of Education to update the Curriculum for Second Level Agricultural Science.
* CIWF and UCD suggested that FAWAC should draw up a vision statement setting out its vision for the future of animal welfare.

# EWS

* A report of the EWS Steering Group meeting held on 6th September 2012 was provided. Animal welfare problems likely to occur this coming winter in view of the poor weather and farmers advised to assess fodder situation and de-stock non essential animals before winter problems arise. DVOs to be alert to herds whose numbers may have increased dramatically in recent months and the ‘at risk herds’ should be visited earlier this year. Farmers advised to contact their Teagasc advisers and/or attend Teagasc’s Weather Crisis Clinics being held throughout the country. Suggested that IFA and Teagasc contact local radio stations to speak on programmes to offer advice to farmers on dealing with fallout of poor weather. Veterinary Ireland said that it is important to get the message to people in close contact with farmers that they should report any issues giving rise to concern.
* A discussion took place on the need to publicise the work of the EWS, particularly in light of rising feed prices and fodder shortages.
  + Veterinary Ireland suggested that publicity should be aimed at those surrounding affected farmers rather than at the farmers themselves. Many of these farmers don’t realise that they have a problem.
  + Those who could be targeted include local vets, doctors, teachers, neighbours, postmen etc. People who come into regular contact with farmers.
  + The IFA suggested approaching this through placing ads in the Farmer’s Journal, Marts and on Local Radio etc.
  + The Irish Medical Association could also be contacted to circulate a memo to members alerting them to the problems facing farmers and to be vigilant to farmers’ mental health and associated issues.
  + The IFA commended Teagasc on its excellent response with clinics having already started. FAWAC should also endeavour to publicise this.
  + The Chairman set up a working group to monitor the situation and to advise DAFM on how best to tackle the issue of publicity to make sure that all farmers are aware of the support structures and options available.

# Equine Welfare

* Veterinary Ireland said that Local Authorities are still having problems with certain groups who are resisting the regulations.
* Veterinary Ireland mentioned a scheme in the Netherlands where lands have been repopulated with wild horses and whether similar scheme could be applied in Ireland.
* Veterinary Ireland also stressed the need for a centralised database regarding change of ownership of horses.
* The ISPCA said that it has concerns about horse welfare problems arising this winter.
* Feedback has been positive on the draft protocol with Local Authorities (LAs) which aims to bring greater uniformity into how the Control of Horses Act (COH) is applied. A letter has been sent County Managers outlining Department’s proposals for reducing funding to LAs under the COH.

# AOB

Transposition of Regulation 1099/2009 on the Protection of Animals at time of Killing.

* This is being progressed by the Department of Agriculture.

Acutely Injured Animals

* The Secretary gave an update on the meeting held between DAFM, Veterinary Ireland and UCD to discuss the feasibility of an animal ambulance. UCD Vet and Engineering experts were quite clear that they did not believe this to be a viable solution and therefore research in this area would not be well directed.
* UCD Vet School has offered to meet with stakeholders again to discuss possibly solutions. It emphasised that before a solution could be examined, this problem must be quantified properly as well as identifying the nature of the injuries involved to establish any patterns.
* The IFA expressed its disappointment that it was not invited to this meeting.
* Veterinary Ireland raised concerns that the system is not working and that vets are coming under pressure to provide remedies.
* Veterinary Ireland also said that the FSAI are carrying out a report on meat plants which might give some insight. Arthur O’Connor will circulate to Council.
* It was agreed to convene a further meeting involving DAFM, Veterinary Ireland, UCD and the IFA under the stewardship of Sean O’Laoide to progress this issue.

Welfare Economics

* The Chairman said that he has tried to progress this issue but that it is proving difficult.
* Suggestions included contacting Animal Health Ireland or the Scottish Agricultural College on this.
* UCD said that DAFM has recently grant aided a study on economics in pig welfare.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare

* DAFM is examining the appointment of a new Chair to this group and hopes to have one in place in the foreseeable future.

Codes of Practice

* The IFA wanted to put on record that it objects to Codes of Practice being incorporated into legislation as it believes they were prepared and adopted on this basis.
* In response to a question, the Chairman reiterated the position of FAWAC as regards guidelines / codes of practice published in FAWAC education booklets. Codes of practice are published to encourage the highest standards of farm animal welfare in Ireland. They are the product of consensus by representatives / members of FAWAC and are adopted unanimously on the understanding that they are advisory, non-binding codes of best farm animal welfare practice.
* Control of Dogs
* The IFA raised the issue of a cut in funding to Control of Dogs legislation linking this to an increase in sheep kills. This will increase severe welfare cases on sheep farms.

Tail Docking of Pigs

* CIWF asked if there are updated statistics available for this and whether tail docking has decreased in Ireland. CIWF would like to progress this issue.

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