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

**Location:** Agriculture House, Kildare Street

Date: 12th December 2012

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, Brid Farrell (DAFM), Niall O’Nuallain (DAFM), Noel Griffin (ISPCA), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Mary-Anne Bartlett (CIWF), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Stephan Foley (CILDEHS), John O’Roarke (Veterinary Ireland), Bernie Earley (TEAGASC), Sean O’Laoide (Veterinary Ireland), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Colette Connor (DARDNI) Nigel Byers (ICMSA), Henry Burns (IFA), Minister Simon Coveney.

Apologies: Ray Doyle (ICOS),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of last Meeting

* Minutes of 13th September 2012 were accepted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* UCD suggested that FAWAC should have been copied with the final chapter of ‘Pastures New’ before its issue. Sean O’Laoide agreed but said he had seen it and was satisfied with its content.
* The Chairman proposed that Agri-Aware be asked to submit a progress report to FAWAC on animal welfare and curriculum change.
* DARD said that their Minister had met with the NI Minister for Education to raise awareness of animal welfare. Some education is taking place particularly in primary schools.
* The Chairman welcomed Henry Burns of the IFA. Mr Burns gave a brief synopsis of his background and said that he is looking forward to working with the Council.

# Education Working Group

* Sean O’Laoide presented the final draft of the FAWAC Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses at Gatherings and Sales and he recommended its adoption. UCD welcomed the document.
* The IFA said it wished to proof-read the document alongside the Animal Health and Welfare Bill and will seek a legal opinion before signing off on the draft. The IFA stated that it had previously made its position clear on codes of practice. The Chairman asked IFA to expedite the matter
* The ISPCA considers enforcement the main issue in this area.
* Vet Ireland said that it should be compulsory to have a veterinarian on site for these events. Sean O’Laoide explained that the guidelines recommend veterinary presence but this cannot be made compulsory.
* DARD explained that it has Codes of Practice and while not legally binding, can be used in court as evidence and are linked directly to legislation. Sean O’Laoide explained that FAWAC take a different approach and it is considered that guidelines are a better option for farmers than regulations

# Minister Simon Coveney

* Professor Fottrell welcomed Minister Coveney and said that his presence demonstrates his commitment to Animal Welfare. The Chairman also thanked the Minister for the support of his Department Officials and gave a brief outline of FAWAC’s work.
* Minister Coveney in response thanked members for their ongoing participation in FAWAC and work in animal welfare. He referred to the Animal Health and Welfare Bill being progressed through the Oireachtas and the role FAWAC may play in aspects of the bill in the future. Minister referred to his intention to introduce codes of practice for Fur Farming to ensure that Ireland can benchmark itself against best practice. The Minister values FAWAC as a forum for providing advice and believes it is more beneficial to work in cooperation and to have legislation in place that all sectors of the community can embrace.
* CIWF raised concerns that the recommendations of the Fur Farming Review Group may allow fur farming other than Mink. The Minister said that this concern would be taken on board when drafting codes of practice.
* The IFA while complementing the Early Warning System on Animal Welfare registered its disappointment on the cuts in funding under the Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme.
* Minister in response said it was a five year scheme which had significantly improved welfare standards within the suckler herd. Funding is not available to continue the scheme and a more targeted scheme is now in place which will cost €10 million pa. €25 million is being spent on the suckler cow welfare scheme in addition to approximately €2 million connected to beef discussion groups.
* The Minister concluded by assuring the Council of his commitment to animal welfare and of the importance of achieving a balance between thriving animals and on legislation to protect and improve their welfare.

# EWS

* DAFM said that the working group to advise on fodder met on 20th September 2012 and measures to publicise EWS were explored. DAFM thanked the IFA for facilitating the publication of the letter from the Chairman in the Farmers Journal.
* EWS information packs have been prepared for distribution to farmers.
* The ISPCA felt sourcing of fodder may be difficult but IFA’s view was that fodder can always be sourced in concentrate form if necessary but that funding is the problem.
* The IFA circulated a leaflet on fodder, compiled in conjunction with Teagasc that has issued with the Farmers Journal. The IFA said that it is difficult to quantify the fodder problem and proposed the creation of an emergency fund for EWS.
* DAFM clarified that there is a mechanism under EWS for provision of emergency fodder
* UCD asked for clarification on the issue at hand that if simply a cash flow issue that farmers be advised sell animals at risk
* The ICMSA said that the situation is more acute this year because farmers have been forced to feed silage throughout the summer.
* The Chairman said that, in his experience, before the issue of money can be discussed the IFA will need to make a case for funding providing accurate data to support its case.
* DAFM agreed that there needs to be a quantification of problems before extra funding can be considered.
* EWS is working well at present within its current brief and DAFM would advocate destocking where farmers run into problems.
* The IFA expressed its dissatisfaction with the views expressed.
* The Chairman said that data is needed to identify if there is an actual animal welfare issue while DAFM cautioned that it is not the responsibility of the state to feed animals and UCD said there are alternative ways to empower farmers and more information must be provided and destocking must be advocated as the primary solution.
* Chairman proposed that EWS representatives meet with a wider group of representatives namely Veterinary Ireland, Teagasc and ICMSA to explore further how EWS can assist farmers experiencing or likely to experience potential fodder difficulties on farms over coming months with the focus on protecting animal welfare.

# Equine Welfare

* Sean O’Laoide said that the equine issue has moved from a general problem to a more targeted problem in specific areas. He encouraged the Minister to take account of this in the Animal Health and Welfare Bill.
* DAFM said that it is working on strengthening the legislation on Equine ID and the Registration of Equine Premises regulations.

# AOB

Tail Docking of Pigs

* CIWF asked for details of pigs with docked tails. UCD warned that there are still significant instances of tail biting even with docking. UCD agreed to update the Council on this. DAFM said that it is continuing to work on implementation of Council Directive 2008/120/EC on loose sow housing. The IFA said that all farmers were aware of the deadline for compliance. CIWF sought details of enrichment materials in pig units DAFM gave a brief overview of types of materials being used and stressed that further research is needed to find affordable and durable materials to meet legislative requirements.

Fur Farming

* The Chairman mentioned that the report of the Fur Farming Review Group commissioned by the Minister recommends that Codes of Practice be established and FAWAC may have a role to play in this regard.
* CIWF and ISPCA both urged caution with FAWAC being involved in this matter.
* DAFM said that fur farming is a legitimate farming industry and the review is trying to be constructive and improve welfare and management practices for fur animals

Acutely Injured Animals

* DAFM said that a letter has issued to the IFA requesting data on numbers of animals and types of injury involved. UCD stressed the need for this data before a solution can be considered. The IFA reiterated its disappointment at the lack of support for its animal ambulance proposal and is compiling the figures as requested.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare

* A new Chair will be appointed soon.

Animal Health and Welfare Bill

* DAFM explained that the Bill has passed Committee Stage in the Dail.

Back Yard Pigs

* UCD raised concerns about hobby farmers and sought statistics from DAFM on this.

The Chair thanked all members for their work throughout the year and wished everyone a Happy Christmas and a successful 2013.

END