# Minutes of the Fiftieth Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 22nd March 2013

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, Brid Farrell (DAFM), Niall O’Nuallain (DAFM), Noel Griffin (ISPCA), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Arthur O’Connor (Veterinary Ireland), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Henry Burns (IFA),

Apologies: Stephan Foley (CILDEHS), John O’Roarke (Veterinary Ireland), Colette Connor (DARDNI), Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Discussion with Dr. Vanessa Woods of Agri-Aware

* Dr. Vanessa Woods, Executive Director gave an overview of what Agri-Aware does and how it is funded. Agri-Aware recently secured first place at the “European Commission’s CAP 50 Communications Awards”.
* Its textbook Pastures New has been distributed to over 7,000 students out of a national total of 13,000 Agricultural Science Students.
* Agri-Aware will have approximately 3,000 students taking its Farm Walk and Talk. It also maintains Facebook and Twitter pages.
* UCD said that FAWAC should be lobbying the Minister for Education in regard to updating the syllabus. The Department has a responsibility to ensure that children are learning up to date information on animal welfare. UCD will send a letter to the Minister on this issue. The IFA complimented Agri-Aware on its textbook and said it is fully supports its work.

# Minutes

* The Minutes of the previous meeting (12 December 2012) were accepted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* The IFA said gathering data on ‘acutely injured animals’ is proving difficult. UCD said that this is an area that could be tackled. A group comprising the IFA, UCD and Vet Ireland have met to discuss the issue and will report to the Council.
* Mary-Anne Bartlett has notified the Chairman that she is retiring from the FAWAC. The Chairman read Mary-Anne’s letter to the Council and complimented her as being extremely dedicated and a great humanitarian. The Chairman said that it was a privilege to work with her on the Council and asked that this be conveyed to Mary-Anne.
* Colm Gaynor has been appointed as Chair of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare.
* The Chair reiterated his thanks to Minister Simon Coveney for attending the previous Council Meeting.

# Education Working Group

* The IFA referred to its legal advice relating to the use of FAWACs Codes of Practice and asked that FAWAC be given the opportunity to review its Codes should the Minister wish to adopt them in legislation. The IFA undertook to submit its legal advice to FAWAC for information.
* The Chair re-affirmed the position as laid out in December 2011: FAWAC Codes are to be used as guides to best practice. Any use of these Codes in legislation would have to be signed off by the Council.
* UCD pointed out that Codes of Practice are already in national legislation (SI 311 of 2010) and as they are a matter of public record they can be used in court.
* DAFM reiterated that these Codes are a valuable resource for farmers and this should not be overlooked.

# EWS

* DAFM reported that the Committee to deal with the fodder issue had met and all options are being explored to get the message out to farmers. Each DVO maintains a list of at-risk herds and these are being monitored closely
* The IFA said that farmers are aware of the issues, cattle prices are high which will encourage farmers to sell. However IFA said should the current wet weather continue the fodder situation will deteriorate.
* DAFM said that it has a budget to provide emergency short term relief to farmers with welfare issues and assistance has been provided to farmers in need. DAFM stressed that farmers in receipt of emergency support must address problems so that they do not re-occur, whether by sourcing feed elsewhere or reducing stock numbers to a manageable level.
* Vet Ireland identified the main issues as being parasite problems with high level of fluke, poor body condition of animals arising from environmental/weather factors in 2012 and that there is an onus on the IFA/Teagasc/Vet Ireland to get advice to farmers on how to manage in this critical time.
1. **Equine Welfare**
* The ISPCA is concerned that the horsemeat DNA issue may impact on welfare long term and that an exit point is required for those horses that do not meet the requirements for slaughter and suggested that a subsidised disposal facility for unwanted horses be considered.
* DAFM said that any type of subsidised cull must be approached with caution and referred to the existing mechanisms in place for dealing with unwanted horses including the local authority work under the ‘control of horses’ legislation. The IFA said that there are still markets for horsemeat and this should not be forgotten.
* The ISPCA said that horses should be incorporated into reviews of at-risk herds, DAFM confirmed that this is being done.
* Vet Ireland said that the horsemeat issue should improve enforcement in the long term.

# AOB

*Pig Enrichment and Sow Welfare*

* The IFA said that in conjunction with Teagasc it is looking at how matters are progressing in other EU countries and considers that financial issues are still impeding progress in this area.
* UCD said that Dr. Niamh O’Connell, Queens University is carrying out research on this area of environmental modifications to improve pig behaviour.

*Animal Health and Welfare Bill*

* The Secretary said that the Bill will go to the Dail on Wednesday the 27th of March.

*Conference on the Transport of Live Animals*

* DAFM said that a Conference ‘Bringing Best Practice to Light’ is being organised on 29th May 2013 by the Irish Presidency in conjunction with the European Commission. A link for registration will be circulated to Members.

*Presentation by Temple Grandin*

* UCD said that it will circulate a note of Professor Grandin’s talk at UCD on 5th April on humane slaughter of animals.

*Backyard Pigs*

* The Secretary provided details of numbers of registration of backyard flocks - pigs. UCD suggested that there should be a registration fee to cover administration.

*Dog Attacks on Sheep*

* The ISPCA said it would welcome statistics on this matter. The IFA said that it will provide when available and suggested that James Murphy, Chair of the IFA Sheep Committee, be invited to speak to the Council.

***End***