# Minutes of the Fifty-First Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 12th September 2013

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, Brid Farrell (DAFM), Niall O’Nuallain (DAFM), Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Sean O’Laoide, Peter Lawrence (Teagasc), John O’Roarke (Veterinary Ireland), Colette Connor (DARDNI).

Apologies: Kevin Kinsella (IFA), Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC), Arthur O’Connor (Veterinary Ireland), Henry Burns (IFA), Stephen Foley (CILDEHS).

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

**Minutes**

* The Minutes of the previous meeting (19th June) were accepted with changes.

1. **Matters Arising**

* There were no matters arising.

1. **Education Working Group**

* A meeting was held between the Secretary, the Chair of the Education Working Group and the IFA where agreement was reached on the following wording:

“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.

FAWAC wish to assure the IFA that should the Minister wish to adopt FAWAC codes of practice under Sec 25.1 b of the Animal health and Welfare Act 2013 FAWAC will undertake a full review of the relevant codes of practice in advance of their adoption.”

On this basis, the Council can proceed with the publication of the Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses at Gatherings and Sales.

* Suggestions were made for the next project to be undertaken by this group.

1. **EWS**

* An EWS Steering Group Meeting is to be held in October 2013. Data from Teagasc indicates that the fodder situation is good. 72% have good supplies with 28% having average supplies. Teagasc added that overall there is more than sufficient fodder. Also, world grain prices have dropped and there is more than sufficient cereal.
* Feed quality is far superior to the previous year and Teagasc are trying to push farmers to sample feed for nutritional quality so that they know the areas that need to be supplemented.
* ICOS said that markets are needed for lower grade animals but at present these are poor. Live export is a positive but overall the numbers are small.
* The Chair reiterated that the EWS in so far as is practicable take account of the human health/welfare dimension when dealing with animal welfare issues. The level of suicide, particularly amongst young me, is a cause for concern.
* UCD said that a paper to be presented from Catherine Devitt might be of interest to the Council particularly in getting support from GPs for Department officials in dealing with human health issues in context of animal welfare issues. Awareness needs to be raised amongst GPs.
* **Equine Welfare**
* A meeting of the Equine Liaison Group was held on the 23rd of June. There was general agreement that the key concern is a surplus of horses with zero value. The number of slaughtering for human consumption has reduced from last year and there is potential for welfare concerns. There was reluctance to request an overall cull due to negative connotations of such a move.
* Change of ownership has been identified as a key issue. DAFM is examining this and hopes to have something in place in the near future.
* The ISPCA noted that it is important to link the urban and rural problems. There is a high level of crossover between the two.
* Vet Ireland put on record that it has reservations about the potential for success of a once off amnesty. Many of the problem horses are not costing ther owners anything and there would be no incentive for them to have the horses slaughtered.
* DAFM said that there will be rigorous enforcement in the futhre of the regulations on equine id and on equine premises registraiton and this should address many of the problems.

1. **AOB**

*ISPCA*

Noel Griffin is no longer with the ISPCA. The Chair wished to thank Noel on behalf of FAWAC for his work in this area and wish him well in the future.

*Pig Enrichment and Sow Welfare*

UCD said that it is in the early stages of a 3 year study. There is a Masters project that has interesting research on abattoir condemnations. When there are further conclusions this will be presented to Council.

The Chair said that there is a need for the IFA to nominate a representative to the council who has responsibility for pigs and other intensive enterprises.

*Pig Mortality Rates*

UCD said that the pig mortality rates on-farm are high and should be examined. The Chair asked for further information on this issue.

*Acutely Injured Animals*

This is being progressed between UCD, Veterinary Ireland and the IFA. As a positive, the health mark has been changed so that these animals can be processed and sold along with all others.

*Presentations at the next meeting of FAWAC*

1. Martin Farrell, DAFM will make a presentation on the new Equine ID Regulations.
2. Sean O’Laoide will make a presentation on the Control of Horses Act.

***End***