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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 27th March 2014

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, Brid Farrell (DAFM), Niall O’Nuallain (DAFM), Dr Andrew Kelly (ISPCA), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Sean O’Laoide, Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC), Henry Burns (IFA), John McConnell (DARDNI), Arthur O’Connor (Veterinary Ireland).

Apologies: Stephen Foley (CILDEHS), John O’Roarke (Veterinary Ireland). Alison Hanlon (UCD), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Kevin Kinsella (IFA).

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

**Minutes**

* The Minutes of the previous meeting of the 11th December 2013 were accepted with changes.
1. **Matters Arising**
* The Chairman welcomed Dr Andrew Kelly of the ISPCA to the Council.
* The IFA apologised for being unable to give the presentation on Pig Welfare at this meeting and said that it will take place at the next meeting.
1. **Education Working Group**
* The most recent booklet on Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses at Gatherings and Sales is ready for print. However a decision has been taken to delay publication pending the publication of new legislation on Equine Identification and Transfer of Ownership.
* The next guideline booklet will be a Code of Practice for On Farm Euthanasia of Pigs. One meeting has taken place and progress has been very positive.
* The Council discussed a proposal for FAWAC to issue a statement outlining the difference between Animal Welfare and Animal Rights. It is important to educate the public that there are situations when euthanasia of animals is a necessary, and often humane, act. This was agreed by the Council and passed to the Education Working Group to draft a suitable statement.
* The Secretary reported that the Department of Education has agreed to review the Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science curriculum. The Secretary met with Dr Vanessa Woods of Agri-Aware to discuss how FAWAC can input into this process. A background document is due in April of this year and Agri-Aware will have a seat on the Council charged with reviewing this curriculum. It is envisaged that Animal Welfare will now be an examinable subject and FAWAC will have input into how this is approached.

It was agreed that the Chair of the Education Working Group will form a sub-group comprised of FAWAC Members to draft coherent proposals from FAWAC to be submitted to Agri-Aware. All members will get an opportunity to feed into this process and the final proposals will be cleared by the Council. This process should begin as soon as possible and Sean O’Laoide will deal directly with Dr Woods on this process.

1. **EWS**
* Two regional meetings have taken place and a further two will take place next week. There is good feedback all-round with encouraging signs of cooperation between the different stakeholders without the need for central coordination.
* A question arose as to the welfare impact of the expansion of dairy cattle. Teagasc said that it is to carry out a desk exercise on this issue. A number of concerns were raised about the impact of this expansion.

 **Equine Welfare**

* DAFM gave an overview of how it is attempting to tackle equine issues in conjunction with other bodies. Good progress has been made with a number of major cases addressed.
* Letters have issued to all SPCAs asking them to alert the Department to any cases involving 10 or more horses.
* The new Equine Identification Regulations will align detention periods with Control of Horses at five days.
* There are some problems with welfare bodies rehoming without checking that those taking the horses have sufficient means to take care of them. However, overall the message has reached welfare bodies that not all horses can be rehomed and, as per the FAWAC advice, euthanasia can be the most humane option.
* A discussion took place on the welfare of horses at marts. It was agreed that the best way to use the new FAWAC Guidelines is to meet with mart organisers during the quiet season and go through the guidelines individually.
1. **AOB**

*Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 (Number 15 of 2013)*

The Act was commenced in February 2014 and a number of Statutory Instruments have already been published.

*Sheep Attacks*

A lengthy discussion took place on the issue of sheep attacks by dogs. The IFA agreed to circulate data on the numbers of sheep lost in this way. The Council also agred to recommend to DAFM that the wording in the Code of Practice for Welfare Bodies be changed to read “animals attacking sheep **must** be destroyed”. (Check exact wording!!!)

Microchipping of Dogs

A discussion took place on this issue. A number of Members felt that this should be linked to the current dog licensing system.

*Acutely Injured Animals*

A research proposal was circulated to Council. The Chair referred this to DAFM for comment and also asked that Teagasc take note and consider whether this could be something that it might look to advance. Vet Ireland and the IFA stated that this is a project that they feel must be pursued.

*SACAHW*

The SACAHW has had three meetings and a sub-group has been set up to address a number of specific questions referred to it by the Minister.

Secretary Alan P O’Brien

The Chairman wished to thank the Secretary for his work on the Council over the last number of years. The Secretary has been efficient, professional and diplomatic and on behalf of the Council the Chair would like to wish him well in his new career.

***End***