

Minutes

MEETING OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

Date: 16th January 2024

Venue: DAFM Backweston Campus, Seminar Room 3

Meeting Time: 11.00am – 1.00pm

Attendees:

Eoin Ryan (DAFM) (acting chair), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Stephanie Ronan (DAFM), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), TJ Maher (IFA), Tomas Burke (IFA), Declan Hanrahan (IFA), Alan Walsh (DAFM).

Online: Michael Kilcoyne (Cllr Mayo CoCo), Conor Dowling (ISPCA), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Bernadette Earley (Teagasc).

Apologies: Sean Murray, Elizabeth O'Flynn.

1. Minutes of previous meeting

Noted Ciara Feeney-Reid has resigned as Chair, with Eoin Ryan performing the role of acting chair for this meeting.

DAFM raised intention to expand on existing Urban Horse projects and called on group for suggestions in this area to progress same.

Minutes of previous meeting were accepted.

2. FAWN update

Three in-person FAWN meetings took place over the course of November and December 2023 in Athlone, Thurles and Gorey. A Garda representative with a background in crime prevention and community policing was present at the two Southern region meetings.

Feedback in terms of communication and co-operation between stakeholders was generally positive and local networks were working well, however it was noted there was confusion among some FAWN attendees about the remit of FAWN and the purpose of the meetings.

Group discussed ways to enhance FAWN meetings and whether a change to the existing format/structure may aid the networking nature of these events. It was agreed to review the current format and look at ways to further support local networking and relationship building between staff/representatives of groups attending FAWN meetings.

Action Point: Review FAWN meeting structure/format.

3. On Feirm Ground update

On Feirm Ground 2 is a continuation of the first On Feirm Ground programme. Launched at the 2023 ploughing championships, this is an initiative which will bring together DAFM, Dept of Health and HSE Health and Wellbeing, to develop a training programme for agricultural professionals, allowing them to engage with farmers on their health and wellbeing.

A two-day pilot took place in December 2023 for DAFM staff, with the new round of training expected to begin in March 2024, with three fulltime trainers, with courses running nationwide, of one day duration, for approximately twenty participants, with online delivery also under consideration. Feedback suggests course participants should be drawn from a number of backgrounds to maximise benefit.

The ISPCA informed members of a Thematic group focused on supporting the mental health of Farmers/farming communities, which is part of the EU CAP network.

Group discussed the negative impact TB restrictions can have on farms through isolation.

Action Point: DAFM to circulate link to EU CAP Network Thematic Group on supporting Farmer/Farming communities mental health to IFA FAWAC members.

Action Point: On Feirm ground training invites to be sent to a wide catchment to include but not limited to, FAWN reps, FAWAC members, Mart personnel, once the new phase of training is established.

4. Website Update

The FAWAC website is part of a suite of online initiatives currently being worked on by Animal Welfare Division of DAFM. Work is ongoing to transfer the FAWAC website to Gov.ie, which will also require a redevelopment of the site. Members will be kept informed of progress.

5. Codes of Practice under the Animal Health and Welfare Act, 2013

Group discussed Codes of Practice, which would have legal status, compared to guidelines. The Group also noted that similar topics may be discussed in the context of the development of the upcoming Bord Bia module on Animal Welfare.

FAWAC noted the EFSA call for evidence on the welfare of beef cattle on farm, with a 31st January closing date for submissions. IFA are currently compiling their response.

Action Point: Sub-group to carry out a scoping exercise in the area of cattle welfare.

6. Eurobarometer Update and Survey Proposal

Eurobarometer results on citizens attitudes to animal welfare were discussed.

A survey proposal to capture the Irish citizen's views on animal welfare was put to the group, however this proposal was not widely supported.

Action Point: ACCAW may proceed with a survey on Irish attitudes to animal welfare; if so, FAWAC will be provided with updates on progress.

7. EU Transport Update and Calf Welfare

Update given on the EU draft regulations on the protection of animals during transport.

Group noted the upcoming Spring season, the importance of protecting calf welfare, and the impact any impediment to live export trade could have on calf welfare.

The need for TB restricted farms to have an outlet for calves, in order to reduce workload, where outward sale is not an option, was raised.

8. FAWAC Priorities for 2024

Sub-group scoping exercise.

FAWN – Update meeting structure.

Poultry and Horse welfare

Noted DAFM currently in the process of purchasing microchip reading equipment, for horses, which will then be distributed to all Garda crime prevention officers, nationwide.

Action Point: DAFM to respond to request to explore possibility of contributing to the cost to the landowner of disposing of dead stray horses found on farmland.

9. AOB

Increase in dog attacks on sheep, so far in 2024, highlights the need for more awareness in responsible dog ownership. DAFM highlighted measures currently being undertaken

with responsible dog ownership leaflet, consistent messaging, working with the Control of Dogs working group and DAFM funded charities needing to provide an SOP on aggressive dogs, to name but a few. Also noted DRCD increased dog fines and the number of dog wardens has also been increased.