

Minutes

MEETING OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

Date: 12th February 2025

Venue: DAFM Backweston Campus, Shared Facilities Building

Meeting Time: 11.00am – 1.00pm

Attendees:

Joseph O’Flaherty (Chair), Mary McCarthy (DAFM), Mairead Cooney (DAFM) Stephanie Ronan (DAFM), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Catherine McAloon (UCD), Bernadette Earley (Teagasc), Donal Callaghan (IFA), Amanda Mooney (IFA), Declan Hanrahan (IFA), Noel Murphy (ICMSA), Alan Walsh (DAFM).

Apologies: Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Barbara Bent (ISPCA), Tomas Burke (IFA), TJ Maher (IFA), Elizabeth O’Flynn (Veterinary Ireland).

1. Introduction by new Chair

The new Chair introduced himself to the group, outlining his background and expectations for FAWAC going forward. The Chair also asked for stakeholders to share any relevant information/reports they may have, with the Chair/group.

- **Action Point:** Members to forward Chair, their organisation’s policies in relation to animal welfare.
- **Action Point:** DAFM to circulate Chair’s email address.

2. Reflection by Stakeholders

Responding to a request from the Chair, stakeholders gave their views on the operation of FAWAC in recent years and on the priorities for the Council in the future. The following points were raised:

- Potential for expanded FAWAC membership, noting that this would require Ministerial approval.
- Site visits for group, to enhance knowledge areas.
- Improved animal welfare in settings for intensively reared species.
- The need for earlier intervention, through FAWN, at local level, regarding farmer/farm animal welfare issues.
- Consider representation of FAWAC at EuroFAWC (Austria).

- Given resource constraints, FAWAC needs to prioritise animal welfare issues under its remit by reference to their effectiveness, cost-effectiveness, tractability and strategic importance.
 - Consider developing links to education, including the agricultural colleges.
 - Ensure continued focus on transport of live animals and calf husbandry practices, esp. relating to painful procedures and calf feeding practices.
 - Consider the impacts on animal welfare of climate change and climate change policy
 - FAWAC to keep under review the potential impact on animal welfare of new technology, including the use of sexed semen.
 - Development of codes of practice.
 - Animal welfare on so called “Hobby Farms”.
 - Pet abandonment.
 - Need for the updating of the FAWAC website.
 - Consider developing a social media presence for FAWAC
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- **Action Point:** DAFM to consider new FAWAC members, which will require ministerial approval.
 - **Action Point:** IFA to host next meeting.
 - **Action Point:** DAFM to review the respective terms of reference of FAWAC & ACCAW.
 - **Action Point:** Invite Laurance Shalloo (Teagasc) to next meeting.
 - **Action Point:** DAFM to clarify position in relation to registration of Alpacas.

3. FAWN update

DAFM outlined background and purpose of FAWN. Potential for local network meetings, outside of FAWN discussed, to address and support issues at local level.

Section 42 communication protocol was discussed.

DAFM outlined dates for upcoming round of FAWN meetings.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to quantify number of Section 42 notices issued.
- **Action Point:** Chair requested more information regarding communication process between DAFM and Bord Bia, in relation to Section 42 notices.

4. Update on EU Transport rules

DAFM updated on current situation regarding EU Transport rules, Ireland's position and the legislative process at EU level.

- **Action Point:** Teagasc to share research carried out into feeding calves at sea, with Chair.
- **Action Point:** Request Laurence Shalloo (Teagasc), member of DAFM Transport division and member of DAFM dairy beef action plan, to attend next FAWAC meeting.
- **Action Point:** Review interaction between FAWAC and the Calf Stakeholder Forum, groups,
- **Action Point:** Through UCD, seek a presentation to FAWAC by Muireann Conneely on the effect of transport on calf welfare.

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

Group discussed current animal welfare guidelines and agreed that although they are still relevant, due to the updates in scientific approaches, they require updating. EFSA opinion could form the basis of updates, potentially focusing on the Beef welfare guidelines first.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to provide legal background for Codes of Practice and highlight areas for development of new Codes of Practice.
- **Action Point:** FAWAC to interact with DAFM in relation to developing Codes of Practice.

6. Website Update

FAWAC discussed website and found it is out of date and requires updating, with linkages to other relevant websites discussed.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to review website and remove material that is out of date.
- **Action Point:** DAFM to update website with new content.
- **Action Point:** Stakeholders to make suggestions for website updates.
- **Action Point:** DAFM to provide usage stats for website.

7. AOB

- **Action Point:** DAFM to contact Laurance Shalloo regarding attending next FAWAC meeting.
- **Action Point:** IFA to confirm if it can host the next meeting.

Next meeting: 28th May, IFA Farm Centre, Bluebell, D12 YXW5.