

Minutes

MEETING OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

Date: 22nd October 2025
Venue: ICOS HQ, Merrion Square, Dublin 2.
Meeting Time: 10.30am – 12.30pm

Attendees:

Joseph O’Flaherty (Chair), Mary McCarthy (DAFM), Mairead Cooney (DAFM), Donal Callaghan (IFA), TJ Maher (IFA), Declan Hanrahan (IFA), Noel Murphy (ICMSA), Michael O’Connell (ICMSA), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Catherine McAloon (UCD), Martin McElearney (IFA), Bernadette Earley (Teagasc), Michael Sheahan (Buitelaar Group), Alan Walsh (DAFM).

Apologies: Elizabeth O’Flynn (Vet Ireland); Stephanie Ronan (DAFM), Catherine Lawler (DAFM), Michael Kilcoyne (Cllr Mayo CoCo).

1. Approval of Agenda

Agenda was agreed.

2. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of previous meeting were approved.

3. Action points and matters arising

Action point review:

DAFM reported that the addition of new FAWAC members (Bord Bia, AHI, NSPCA), requiring Ministerial approval, is progressing, with the intention for these to join FAWAC ahead of the first meeting of 2026.

DAFM clarified that FAWAC’s remit extends to the species normally farmed commercially for food production purposes in Ireland, as well as equines.

Referring to an open action point from previous meetings, the Chair repeated the invitation to all members who have not done so to date to forward him such policies as their organisations may have on the welfare of farmed animals.

4. Codes of Practice

Referring to the background note, circulated prior to the meeting, the Chair outlined the background and function associated with codes of practice and confirmed FAWAC will proceed to develop a code of practice for calf to beef rearing systems. A subgroup Chair from UCD was nominated, who will now, in conjunction with the FAWAC Chair, proceed to nominate subgroup members, develop terms of reference, and commence work in January 2026. The subgroup will report progress back to FAWAC over the course of 2026.

IFA noted they are currently involved in developing a code of practice, with DAFM, for beef and biosecurity and requested DAFM liaise with the relevant division in DAFM, leading the development, to ensure there will be no overlap between that work and the proposed work of the animal welfare subgroup.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to contact Veterinary Public Health division in relation to beef and bio-security code of practice terms of reference.
- **Action Point:** CoP subgroup Chair, in conjunction with FAWAC Chair to nominate members to the subgroup and develop terms of reference for the proposed work.
- **Action Point:** DAFM to share the submission, received from Veterinary Ireland, in relation to the proposed development of a Code of Practice.

5. DAFM Animal Welfare Strategy

DAFM updated the group on the proposed updated Animal Welfare Strategy, which is currently under development, highlighting that the Minister will launch a public consultation for same in November.

- **Action Point:** Chair requested member organisations who are willing to do so to share their submissions to the public consultation with him, so as to facilitate discussions on this topic at the next meeting of FAWAC.
- **Action Point:** Chair to review members' submissions to DAFM on the draft animal welfare strategy at a meeting in January 2026.
- **Action Point:** Chair to convene a meeting following the development by DAFM of a first draft Animal Welfare Strategy to allow detailed discussion of same by members.

6. FAWAC Website

DAFM transferred a copy of the live FAWAC website to a development environment within the DAFM network. The next iteration of updates have been submitted for implementation and are expected to be actioned in the near future.

7. Calf to Beef system – animal welfare aspects

Dr. Michael Sheahan, representing the Buitelaar group presented on the Buitelaar calf to beef system. As part of the presentation, Dr. Sheahan referred to the development in Great Britain of a calf strategy for the period 2025-2030. An academic paper on the health and production effects of the 'knock-down' disbudding and castration was also referenced.

In the discussion that followed, it was noted that certain structural differences between Irish and UK farming systems would require modifications to the latter in order to adapt to Irish conditions.

The Buitelaar group informed they host open days through the year at their UK facility and extended an invitation to FAWAC members who wish to attend.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to share slides with group.

8. AOB

Chair highlighted intention to have four FAWAC meetings in 2026.

- **Action Point:** Include EFSA opinion on housing for cattle, on agenda of January meeting.
- **Action Point:** Teagasc to share EFSA opinion.

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