

Minutes

MEETING OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

Date: 15th April 2026
Venue: Seminar room 1, Backweston
Meeting Time: 10.00am – 12.00pm

Attendees:

Joseph O’Flaherty (Chair), Mary McCarthy (DAFM), Stephanie Ronan (DAFM), Donal Callaghan (IFA), Elizabeth O’Flynn (Vet Ireland), David Hall (IFA), Siobhan Mullan (UCD), Catherine McAloon (UCD), Michael O’Connell (ICMSA), Bernadette Earley (Teagasc), Michelle McGrath (AHI), Clare Owens (NSPCA), Declan Hanrahan (IFA), Rosanne Greene (DAFM), Richie Gordon (DAFM), Alan Walsh (DAFM).

Online: Noel Murphy (ICMSA) Chris Andrews (DAERA).

Apologies: Martin McElearney (IFA), Ray Doyle (ICOS), Mairead Cooney (DAFM).

1. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was agreed without amendment.

2. Approval of Minutes of previous meeting

IFA proposed an amendment to the previous minutes, which was accepted.

3. Action points and matters arising

Action Point: Chair to circulate a document to group in relation to the 2026 work programme.

4. Work programme

Following on from previous meeting, Chair elaborated on work programme for 2026. IFA raised potential issues with the operation of FAWN and proposed its inclusion in the work programme for 2026. DAERA briefed group on a similar initiative in Northern Ireland.

- **Action Point:** IFA to send FAWN comments to DAFM.
- **Action Point:** FAWN to be included on agenda for next meeting.

5. Wall report on equine traceability and welfare – update by DAFM on implementation

A presentation on the Wall report action plan was made by a member of DAFM AIM division, highlighting the current status of the implementation plan and the timeframe for completion of same. A significant action of the implementation project has been the establishment of a new central equine database with linked online portal for equine operator profiles, which is greatly enhancing traceability over the entire lifecycle of equines and will also facilitate more accurate data driven inspections. DAFM also informed the group that there has been extensive cross border cooperation in relation to the development of the equine central database.

In the Questions and Answers that followed, members sought clarification in relation to a number of matters, including:

- Potential CCTV usage at slaughterhouses and assembly points.
- Premises registration.
- Realtime capturing of deaths.
- Metrics and effectiveness of measures.
- Unregulated horses.

DAFM informed the group that a draft Statutory Instrument is currently under development to cover, among other issues, CCTV usage and premises registration. In terms of the other issues, DAFM highlighted how the central equine database and a new I.T system will lead to a full real-time capturing of deaths and how the central equine database has driven improvements in the areas of metrics and effectiveness, on a daily basis. In the area of unregulated horses a multi-stakeholder working group could potentially be formed to develop policy for same. DAERA briefed on the situation in NI and the launch of the equine establishment number in 2025.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to share presentation.
- **Action Point:** DAFM to share draft SI.

6. DAFM Animal Welfare Strategy

A. Update by DAFM

Work on collating and analysing submissions received from the Animal Welfare Strategy public consultation is ongoing with the intention of drafting a document by the end of Q2 2026.

B. Discussion on draft letter from Chairperson

Chair previously circulated draft letter to group for observations. The main feedback was in relation to painful procedures, equine welfare and non-stun slaughter. The Chair noted equine welfare had already been covered previously in

the meeting (Item 5). Regarding painful procedures, the issue of availability of anaesthetic was raised, however DAFM provided an update on availability which highlighted the increased supply in this area. In relation to non-stun slaughter (NSS), the issue of balancing animal welfare with religious beliefs was raised. The legislative framework governing NSS was discussed, as was religious certification and policy and practice in other countries. DAERA reported that, currently, Northern Ireland does not carry out religious non-stun slaughter. Veterinary Ireland raised an issue in relation to the use of the term 'rights' in connection with animal welfare.

- **Action Point:** Chair to redraft letter on Animal Welfare strategy to take account of feedback received.

7. Code of Practice subgroup on calf welfare - update

The subgroup updated on their approach to structure and terminology and have advanced drafts for chapters on stockpersonship and feed & water, with housing next. The subgroup reported that they are progressing well and are approaching the half-way point of the project.

- **Action Point:** Code of Practice subgroup on calf welfare to be a recurring agenda item.

8. Website

The new FAWAC website launched on 23/03/26. DAFM has received comments in relation to the website, which will be actioned into updates and applied to the site in due course.

9. AOB

UCD extended an invite to the group to the launch of the Higher Welfare roadmap for pig farming on the 29th April.

UCD raised salmon welfare as a potential inclusion for the workplan.

DAFM updated on the schedule relating to Ireland's European presidency in relation to animal welfare transport regulations.

The Chair restated his preference to continue the rotation of venue for FAWAC meetings.

- **Action Point:** UCD to send Chair documents on salmon welfare.

- **Action Point:** DAFM to contact Fisheries division to determine if salmon welfare falls under FAWAC remit.
- **Action Point:** Animal welfare transport regulations to be included on next agenda.

Next Meeting: TBD