Minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

**Venue** ; Agriculture House

**Date**; 5 November 2002

**Present**; Minister for Agriculture and Food Mr Joe Walsh TD, Professor Patrick

Fottrell ( Chairperson ), David Walsh ( Secretary ), Aidan Murray, Martin

Blake, Alison Hanlon, Jackie Cahill, Damian Kerr, Mary-Ann Bartlett,

Tom Doyle, Angela McCarthy, Bernadette Earley, Barbara Bent, Sean

O’Laoide, Dermot Sparrow, Didier Rebet, Kevin Kinsella, John Stack,

Derek Deane.

**Opening Comments by Chairperson**

The chairperson welcomed everybody to the inaugural meeting of the Council and said that he was looking forward to working closely with all of the members. He proposed the draft agenda and this was adopted.

# Address by Minister

The Minister said that he was delighted to be present at the inaugural meeting. He stated that he was pleased to have been able to establish the Council, which provided a forum within which organisations with a different perspective could meet, try and understand one another’s views and seek to reach a consensus on various aspects of farm animal welfare. He indicated that the degree of consensus reached would clearly have a bearing on the Council’s capacity to influence policy formulation whether in relation to national initiatives or proposals at EU level.He finished by thanking all of the organisations concerned for accepting his invitation to serve on this important and unprecedented body. (The full text of the Ministers speech is attached ).

# Introductions

The chairperson commenced by introducing himself and stating that he had just finished chairing the Committee on Water Fluoridation which had had a similar composition of members with diverse and sincere views, backgrounds, interests and mutual recognition of the different backgrounds. He felt that everybody present was supportive of animal welfare issues. This Council was unprecedented, was a forum where all members would be allowed to express their opinions and views and be listened to and where members could talk “With” rather than “At” one another. The Terms of Reference are broad and allow all members to put their views forward which will enable the Council to give advice to the Minister. He said that we could learn from other similar organisations “Best Practices” and that he would personally liase with them. At the next meetings a work programme setting out objectives and targets would be drawn up along with a discussion on a strategic plan from which papers, reports and public awareness campaigns would emanate.

Following a general introduction by all members the chairperson asked that they all send to the secretary a two sentence personal curriculum vitae along with a brief description of their organisation.

**Terms of Reference**

The chairperson stated that the T.O.R. were broad enough to allow all views and opinions to be taken on board and discussed by Council. The four points put forward were adopted ( see attached ).

# Modus Operandi

The chairperson stated that at the next meeting he would propose that the Council adopt a 3-year work programme along with drafting a strategic plan. The Council had an open-ended time scale, was non statutory, and that organisations could be represented at all meetings as alternates could be used. Sub groups would be formed where necessary and would report to Council. Any matters requiring a scientific opinion would be sent to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare which would shortly hold its inaugural meeting and whose chairperson he would be meeting with shortly. This was agreed following a general discussion.

**Main Issues of Interest**

The chairperson stated that as this was an inaugural meeting he was only inviting general comments and that all members should forward to the secretary any points along with whatever supporting data they feel were pertinent to the workings of the Council. These points could then be discussed in more detail with a view to adopting them in the Councils work programme and strategic plan. He felt that the Council should begin discussing areas that attract a broad consensus of views. This approach was agreed following a general discussion.

The main indicative areas raised by the members and where welfare issues could be considered for inclusion in the work programme were as follows;

* Transport
* Broiler chickens
* Laying hens
* Pigs
* Inclusion of dogs
* Sheep
* Inclusion of horses
* Benchmarking other similar organisations
* Welfare education within the farming industry
* Public awareness campaigns of what is already in place
* The need for more inspectors to carry out welfare inspections
* Liase with supermarkets on welfare issues
* Liase with Bord Bia on their “Assurance” schemes
* Examine the ability of SPCA’s to respond to welfare lapses
* Examine existing legislation
* Examine legislation passed but yet to be introduced
* Define animal welfare for each species
* Code of practice
* Examine ways to disseminate the Councils deliberations to the public
* Examine ways to educate the Council itself.
* Fur Farming

The chairperson once again stated that the T.O.R. were broad enough to allow members discuss a wide range of farm animal welfare issues and stressed that the remit of the Council as determined by the Minister and reflected in the T.O.R. was confined to “Farm Animals”. He further added that all data may be placed on the Councils website and that the public could in time be asked to submit views and opinions to the Council on specific issues. He finished by asking members that whatever points, views and data they submit to Council that they be factual rather than anecdotal evidence.

**Arrangements for the next meeting.**

It was proposed that the Council and whatever subgroups that will be formed, meet on the morning of the second Wednesday of the chosen month. The next meeting was tentively fixed for 11am on Wednesday 15 January 2003 at which a full calendar of meetings and venues will be discussed. The secretary will send out a claims application form for travel expenses and subsistence.

**A.O.B.**

The chairperson outlined a Quorum Strategy ( see attached ), which was agreed, and reiterated that as a general rule and particularly where issues of sensitivity are concerned he would aim to ensure that all members along with their organisations would be consulted before any decision was reached. As all organisations can send alternates he would at all times be seeking a consensus viewpoint and thus avoid conflict where possible.

The Chairperson finished by asking the departments representatives to examine existing areas of animal welfare that would be of interest to the Council and where a presentation could be made at a future meeting. Patrick Fottrell,

Chairperson,

December, 2002.