# Minutes of the Tenth Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Venue:** Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin

Date: 25th March 2004

Present: P Fottrell (Chairperson), K Kinsella, B Early, D Sparrow, B Bent, A Murray J Stack, MA Bartlett, A J Hanlon, J Cahill, A McCarthy, M Blake, T Doyle, T O’Halloran (Secretary).

**Apologies:** CConnor, S Foley, D Deane.

# 1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes were agreed with no amendments.

# 2. MATTERS ARISING

**IHWT letter:** DAF confirmed that an invitation had been issued to the IHWT, however no reply has been received to date.

**Fur Farming:** It was agreed that the proposed visit should take place on 10th June 2004. Prior to the visit it is hoped that the Council will receive presentations from a number of parties with different perspectives on fur farming. It was agreed that details of the website address for the European Commission’s Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Animal Welfare Report on “The Welfare of Animals Kept for Fur Production” would be circulated to all members. A hard copy of the summary form of this document is also to be circulated. CIWF also drew attention to the “Fur Farming (Prohibition) Bill” recently published by the Green Party.

**Fish Farming:** Subject to their availability, it is hoped that Mr Phil Lymbery, World Society for the Protection of Animals, Mr Richie Flynn, Irish Farmers Association and a representative from the Department of Communications, Marine and Natural Resources will be on hand to address the panel at the next Council meeting on 27th May 2004.

# 3. WORK PROGRAMME

**Farm Animal Welfare Education/Guidelines:** The Working Group Chair stated that two meetings have been held to date. There is a possibility that a draft document will be ready for circulation to Council members at the next meeting.

**Working Group on Co-operation:** IFA stated that the Chairperson of their Animal Health Committee proposes to circulate the final draft document to all committee members for discussion. Should the document be acceptable to the Animal Health Committee, it will then be put before the IFA National Council for formal agreement.

ISPCA stated that they had held a preliminary meeting to discuss the final draft and had more or less agreed how they should proceed.

The Chairperson stated that there is strong agreement in principle among Council members for the document. Substantive work would be required regarding the roll out of the system. A media campaign to inform the public would also have to be put in place. He hoped that FAWAC could sign off on this document at their May meeting to facilitate all the preparative work and also to prevent FAWAC from any negative exposure as a result of undue delay in getting the system up and running. He concluded by saying that the Council appreciated all the work done by all of the bodies concerned and he earnestly requested that the work of the Working Group on Co-operation be brought to a conclusion.

**Working Group on Medicines:**

Following a discussion by the Council as to whether the Terms of Reference for the Working Group on Medicines should be broadened, it was agreed that they would remain as they are rather than limit them in any way. The purpose of the working group is to establish the impact of non-availability of veterinary medicines on animal welfare; identify specific problems and suggest or identify possible solutions. The Working Group will report back to FAWAC who will then make their recommendations to the Minister based on the conclusions reached.

The Chairperson of the Working Group reported to Council that meetings to date identified that the situation was likely to get worse, not better, as more medicines are likely to disappear from the market. Discussions also served to highlight the conflict between consumer interests and animal welfare interests, particularly in terms of residues in food. A balance needs to be drawn between these two areas.

 It was agreed that Dr Tom Barragry, University College Dublin, should be co-opted onto this Working Group.

**Visit to Marts:**

It is hoped to have a Mart visit organised for a date in September since the throughput of animals will be higher at that time.

# 4. ELECTRICAL IMOBILISATION

It was agreed that the question of the use of electricity to immobilise farm animals - electro immobilisation, would be referred to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW) to evaluate the physical and psychological effects on animals subjected to this procedure and to furnish a view. FAWAC will then make a comment to the Minister following receipt of SACAHW opinion.

# 5. NATIONAL PLOUGHING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2004

Following discussion it was agreed that a presence at the National Ploughing Championships should be deferred until 2005. Some members felt however, that FAWAC should consider a presence this year at certain shows held by the Royal Dublin Society.

# 6. PUPPY FARMING

DAF outlined that primary statute responsibility for puppy farming came under the remit of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DOELG) under the Control of Dogs Act 1986 and the Control of Dogs Amendment Act 1992. Statutory responsibility to impose conditions on puppy farmers would be the responsibility of the Minister of that Department. DAF also pointed out that Ireland and the UK have a common control area in relation to the movement of dogs.

ISPCA expressed disappointment with how their recent meeting with DOELG went.

Some members of the Council felt that there is a need for an Inter-Departmental Working Group to be set up to address concerns over this issue. It was agreed that A Murray and S O’Laoide would draft a letter to Minister Walsh suggesting this.

# 7. TRANSPORT OF ANIMALS

DAF reported that significant effort has been put in by Irish Presidency to try to reach agreement on this issue however there was still a significant divergence of views between Member States particularly on the matters of stocking densities, off-loading of animals, staging posts, rest periods and transport times. Discussions between the Department and relevant stakeholders are ongoing. It was agreed that the Council would convey to the Minister its good wishes and the hope that the matter will reach a successful conclusion.

# 8. MEETING WITH UK FAWAC

The Chairperson apologised that due to time constraints he had not been in a position to meet with UK FAWAC

# 9. PRESENTATION BY THE CONSUMER LIAISON PANEL

The Chair welcomed Ms Mairead McGuinness, Chairperson of the Consumer Liaison Panel (CLP) which was established by the Minister for Agriculture and Food to focus on consumers concerns which impact of the Department. Ms McGuinness pointed out the CLP did not have a policy regarding animal welfare. She commented on the following: -

* Europe, and Ireland as member of the EU, should establish scientific guidelines in relation to what constitutes good animal welfare practice.
* There is a view that intensive farming compromised animal welfare however consumers had a split personality when it comes to food i.e. chicken v chicken nuggets – consumers want good welfare standards but they also want cheap food.
* The EU has imposed and continues to impose strict animal welfare regulations on their food producers. There is however a risk that food production could be pushed to countries outside EU control which did not have as stringent a welfare regime. Food production is a global activity not just an EU activity.
* Most people within the EU would view the recent disposal of birds as a result of an Avian Influenza outbreak in Thailand as immoral. Similar action within the EU would have caused uproar.
* Some people favoured extensive/outdoor farming practices while others favoured indoor/intensive systems. These diverging views highlighted the difficulty policy makers face when drawing up welfare regulations/guidelines.
* It behoves people who shape public opinion to compose calm constructive arguments. Polarisation of opinions will have regressive results. Animal welfare must come first; equally however people’s livelihoods cannot be put at risk.
* From a consumers perspective food traceability and consequentially food labelling are major issues.
* The EU has a responsibility to inform consumers and in her view they have failed to do so. This is a major issue that the EU must address as the absence of sound leadership will result in inaccurate opinions being formed. From an Irish perspective, the establishment of groups such as FAWAC and the CLP is a positive move.
* The EU should be taking on board all scientific research in relation to live exports and the transport of animals; something radically wrong if it is not doing so.

The Chair thanked Ms McGuinness for her presentation an expressed the opinion that the view of FAWAC is a scientific one, however consensus is required and a balance needs to be struck. He felt that it would be important for FAWAC to remain in contact with the CLP.

A short question and answer session followed.

## 10. NEXT MEETINGS

27th May 2004 and 10th June 2004.

# 11. AOB

**Ritual Slaughter Without Stunning**

There is a need for the Council to address the practice of ritual slaughter without stunning which is apparently prohibited in Australia and New Zealand. It was suggested that the Council should consider viewing video footage of ritual slaughter without stunning or visit an abattoir where it is being conducted. UK FAWAC is currently looking at this issue and perhaps this Council should start looking at the papers being produced by them.

**OIE – World Organisation for Animal Health – Global Conference on Animal Welfare held in Paris, France on 23rd – 25th February 2004-05-24**

K Kinsella, IFA, B Earley, Teagasc and A Hanlon, UCD, all of whom were in attendance at the meeting, gave a presentation to Council members as to what had taken place. Written reports from the meeting were supplied by B Early and A Hanlon and have been circulated to all Council members.