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

**Venue:** Shelbourne Hotel, Dublin

Date: 9th December 2004

Present: P Fottrell (Chairperson), T Doyle, J Cahill, T O’Donnell, S Foley, MA Bartlett, C Connor, K Kinsella, S O’Laoide, A McCarthy, J Stack, D Deane, A Hanlon, D Sparrow, B Bent, M Blake, Teresa O’Halloran (Secretary).

**Apologies:** B Earley.

# MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the two previous meetings were agreed with amendments.

# MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman welcomed Mr T O’Donnell who replaces Mr A Murray, as Principal, Animal Health and Welfare Division, Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF). It was agreed that a thank-you letter on behalf of Council would issue to Mr Murray.

**Fish Farming:** CIWF asked the Chair to acknowledge receipt of letter, conveying the views of members representing the welfare bodies, in which they express concern that the Council’s views on fish farming were given to the Minister without final approval of all Council members. CIWF asked if the comments submitted by Council members could be looked at again with a view to an additional letter being drawn up and agreed by all members of Council, for issue to the Minister. CIWF stated that it was important that any letter sent to the Minister reflected the views of all members of Council. The Chairman expressed the view that it was necessary sometimes for a Chairman to evaluate submissions received, particularly if there wasn’t consensus among all members, and to make a value judgement. IFA expressed the view that the Chairman had adopted a position and that most agreed with it. CIWF pointed out that it would be important that the view expressed was that of Council and not of the Chairman.

It was agreed to circulate submissions received to all members.

**Fur Farming:** DAF confirmed that all fur farms in Ireland are regulated from a welfare perspective by EU Reg. 98/58 (SI 127 of 2000, Protection of Animals Kept for Farming Purposes). These set out conditions for keeping animals and provide for authorised officers with powers of entry. They also outline conditions regarding good animal husbandry, record keeping, free movement and breeding procedures. DAF carries out inspections regularly of all licensed premises (there are no prescribed times) completing report forms. All fur farms had been inspected within the last year. Regarding slaughter, DAF confirmed that this is also subject to EU Regulation and that responsibility for compliance rested with the operative. There is nothing proscribed to require the checking of slaughter equipment. DAF inspectors have observed slaughter and have not identified any problems in this area. DAF inspections have not identified any significant problems; there is no indication that farms are not complying with legislative requirements. DAF is unaware of any rabbit farms in Ireland either for meat or fur. It is aware of one fox farm. Concern was raised at the fact that fox and rabbit farms remain unlicensed and as such DAF might not be aware of the conditions on such farms. DAF replied that it would be fairly confident of hearing if such a farm were to be established, even so, DAF is driven by a need to regulate less; Council could, they argued, take a view that there is a need for DAF to look for registration of all premises to include rabbit farms, pet shops etc. S O’Laoide is to prepare a paper on this topic to be circulated to all Council members by Secretary.

**Transport:** DAF informed Council that the EU Transport Regulations put forward during the Irish Presidency have been progressed by the Dutch Presidency by setting aside the contentious issues i.e. travel times/stocking densities. The EU Commission is to report to EU Council within the next four years in relation to the contentious issues taking cognisance of EU enlargement and the greater distances this involves. The main points of this new legislation are checks and audits, training of operators and drivers, mandatory satellite tracking for long distances, increased co-operation between Member States re. tracking of route crossing, specific definitions regarding responsibility along transport chain. The Regulation will come into full effect in January 2007. DAF is to supply the Secretary with a summary document of the Regulation for circulation to all Council members.

**Electro-Immobilisation:** It was confirmed that the Scientific Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SCAHW) had met to discuss electro-immobilisation and agreed to: -

* review psychological and physical effects
* look at the legislative position governing its use in Ireland
* look at legislative position, re its use in other jurisdictions (insofar as can be determined)
* come up with a recommendation on whether it should be used in Ireland and if so, under what conditions.

It was agreed that Council would invite Chairman of SCAHW to address them following their deliberations, possibly for February meeting.

#  WORK PROGRAMME

**Farm Animal Welfare Education/Guidelines:** Discussions took place as to whether State policy regarding the export of horses should be included in the education guidelines with the Chair of the Working Group expressing the view that he would prefer that the document remain a welfare manual. DAF agreed stating that the guidelines are for animal husbandry purposes only. Working Group Chair suggested that perhaps another sub-group be set up to look at export of horses.

 DAF stated that it had recently held a meeting with the Irish Horse Welfare Trust (IHWT) and informed Council that IHWT have requested that they be consulted on matters regarding equines. Council agreed to this. Council asked if the conclusions of the DAF/IHWT could be circulated to all members. The Secretary is to liaise with IHWT to check feasibility of this.

 It was also agreed that rather than establish another Sub-Group to look at matters regarding export of horses that the current ‘Education’ Group be expanded to include a member of CIWF and IHWT to discuss matters of concern regarding: -

* exclusion of old horses from the food chain,
* cost implications pertaining to disposal of horses,
* possible introduction of a levy charged at time of horse registration to aid towards cost of disposal of horses,
* with regard to horse welfare – formulation of a policy to deal with identified risks,
* EU animal transportation rules – with particular reference to the possibility that these provide for individual countries to ban the export of horses.

A final draft of the Animal Welfare Guidelines for Equines is to be circulated to all members for their information.

**Working Group on Co-operation:**

The Chair reported that two meetings had taken since the launch in September of the Early Warning/Interventions System for animal welfare cases (EWS) group. The first meeting took place in October with a good representation from all parties involved during which there was a good exchange of views. Another meeting followed on 30th November of the nominees from each of the organisations representing the five counties involved in Phase I of the rollout. These groups had met each other at county level and reported back to the Working Group. It was identified that communication with each other is the key to success. Regarding publicity, all had agreed to adopt a low-key, sympathetic approach when dealing with welfare cases. The five counties are now up and running and some had already dealt with animal welfare cases between the first and second meetings. A review would take place end of March 2005 or earlier if it were felt necessary. Clarification of recent events was also given to members of Council.

**Working Group on Medicines:**

The Working Group Chair reported that his group has nearly completed its work and have reached near agreement of the final document. There are still some fundamental differences of opinion between members of the group. If full agreement cannot be reached then there is a possibility of having to produce a final report with a majority/minority view however it would be preferable for this not to happen.

The Chairman expressed appreciation for all of the work undertaken by this group and

acknowledged that there is always the possibility of conflict between animal welfare needs and food safety requirements.

# NEXT MEETINGS/PROGRAMME FOR 2005

Secretary is to circulate schedule of meetings for 2005 together with aspects of the proposed work programme for 2005.

1. **A.O.B**

The Chairman referred to a letter he had received from DAF, regarding a letter received by Minister Coughlan TD from the Irish Fur Breeders Association (IFBA). This letter referred to the use of privileged information provided by them to FAWAC, by certain Council members, in campaigns to further the aims of their representative organisations. It was acknowledged that FAWAC depended on the goodwill of organisations such as the IFBA to come and inform Council of their work and that no group must feel exploited in doing so. Notwithstanding this however, the Chairman said that details of the work undertaken by FAWAC could potentially be accessed under the Freedom of Information Act. Also, minutes of all Council meetings are available on the DAF Website following adoption by Council. The work of Council is open and transparent.

# PRESENTATIONS

**RITUAL SLAUGHTER WITHOUT STUNNING**

Council members received presentations on the above from the following: -

* Dr Yakkov Pearlman, Chief Rabbi, Jewish Representative Council of Ireland
* Mr Steve Wotton, HNC, MSc., AW Training, Department of Clinical Veterinary Science, Division of Farm Animal Science, university of Bristol, UK
* Dr Nooh Al Kaddo, Executive Director, Islamic Culture Centre was also due to attend but absented himself on the morning due to unforeseen circumstances. Apologies sent. Will possibly make presentation to Council at a later date.

Each presentation was followed by an extensive question and answer session. CIWF asked if Council could find out what position veterinary staff within DAF took regarding this practice. Veterinary Ireland and Local Authority Veterinary staff are against the practice. It was also pointed out that the Federation of European Veterinarians had come out against the concept of it, but understood why it happens. Secretary to circulate to all Council members papers published as referred to above.

It was also agreed that Secretary would also circulate a paper supplied by Ms A Hanlon entitled “Comparison of religious slaughter of sheep with methods that include pre-slaughter stunning, and the lack of differences in exsanguination, packed cell volume and meat quality parameters”. Mr Wotton also referred to an EU Paper re. ritual stunning however he pointed out that the document contained a number of inaccuracies.

The Chairman stated that there is a need for Council to look at evidence based data and that there might be a need to refer some of this to the SCAHW for them to look at some of the evidence presented and also to try and establish what other countries are doing in this area. IFA to obtain information from New Zealand regarding this practice for information of Council.