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

**Venue:** Fitzwilliam Hotel, Dublin.

Date: 8th February 2006.

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), M Blake (DAF), B Bent (WSPCA), C Connor (DARDNI),

M A Bartlett (CIWF), D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), S O’Laoide (Vet. Ireland),

B Earley (TEAGASC), T O’Donnell (DAF), S Foley (CFILDEH&S),

A Hanlon (UCD), A McCarthy (ISPCA), J Stack (IFA), J Bryan (IFA).

**Apologies:** K Kinsella (IFA), J Cahill (ICMSA), Tom Doyle (ICOS).

**Secretary:** T O’Halloran.

Chairman welcomed L McCabe, ICMSA, representing J Cahill. L McCabe informed members that a replacement representative would be nominated at the next ICMSA Council meeting.

Chairman notified members of changes in IFA representation on Council. Mr John Bryan, Chairman National Livestock Committee, will replace Mr D Deane and Mr Richard Kennedy, Chairman, National Diary committee (absent from this meeting), will replace Mr J Stack.

Chairman also extended his congratulations to the following: - B Bent, recently elected onto the Veterinary Council of Ireland; J Cahill, recently elected President of ICMSA; D Deane, recently elected Deputy President of IFA.

1. **MINUTES**

Minutes adopted with 3 amendments.

# MATTERS ARISING

It was agreed that Secretary would circulate material to be supplied by CIWF re. E*lectrical stunning of cattle and safety of operatives,* to Chair of Group dealing Ritual Slaughter Without Stunning.

CIWF agreed to supply view of European Parliament re. proposed Broiler Welfare Directive - to be circulated to Education Sub-group via Secretary.

It was agreed that Secretary would circulate documents supplied by D Sparrow, re. *Emergency slaughter of casualty cattle and pigs,* to Education Sub-group.

Discussion regarding raising public awareness of FAWAC Education Programme – see item 4 below

DAF clarified that Slaughter of Animals Act 1935 and 1988 still applies in Ireland. Chairman again referred to letter received from Minister in which she stated that she would welcome publication of guidelines regarding on-farm slaughter of animals.

# FARM ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION GUIDELINES – BROILERWELFARE

Chair of this Sub-group reported that a meeting had not been convened since Council last met however one is scheduled for 9th March. Broiler Welfare Directive has yet to be adopted at EU level and the group cannot progress work in this area until adoption. DAF confirmed that document is still at Veterinary Working Group level.

Chair confirmed that Group had been circulated with ‘Northern Ireland Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Laying Hens’. CIWF pointed out that the EU Commission is reviewing its position on laying hens.

# RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS OF FAWAC PUBLICATIONS

Secretary has circulated a draft ‘Research Brief’ to Council members seeking their views on type of questions to be asked, research framework; target audience; evaluation of webpage; suggestions for improvement etc. No responses received to date. Chairman stated that FAWC UK had engaged in a consultation process with relevant stakeholders and has developed a five- year strategy. Chairman is to discuss with DAF the possibility of Council initiating consultation with its stakeholders.

# WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)

Chair of this Sub-group reported that EWS has been rolled out to all regions. It was rolled out in the South East in January 2006 and the system is now operating on a countrywide basis. It will take time for it to embed. It is intended to hold meetings with all county groups on a regional basis in the March/April period. The focus will be to ascertain views of groups on the practical application of EWS with a view to improving it further. There are still a number of areas of concern regarding the operation of EWS, which the Steering Group is keeping under review.

 A general discussion took place among members during which a number of concerns were highlighted including the non-involvement of social services and the need to improve education of farmers regarding farm welfare. It was agreed that these concerns be referred to the Steering Group for consideration.

TEAGASC confirmed that they are working in conjunction with an EU Welfare Group and are currently looking at animal welfare index/assessment on-farm, using a rating system that is not a tick box system. It was agreed that B Earley would address Council at the next meeting to define what is currently being done in this area and that any details available would be circulated to members in advance.

It was agreed that B Earley would also address Council on Education.

UCD representative referred to a University of Bristol audit of animal welfare and agreed to send a weblink to Secretary for circulation to members.

DAF confirmed that their forms were evaluation forms and were there for the guidance of inspectors only. It was agreed that copies of these would be circulated to all members.

# DRAFT PROTOCOL FOR THE ON-FARM SLAUGHTER OF ANIMALS

Vet. Ireland representative stated that the Hygiene Package envisaged that this type of slaughter could be carried out on-farm and that the animal may be presented to an abattoir within a two-hour period. Vet. Ireland in conjunction with the British Cattle Veterinary Association, UK, and Food Safety Standards Authority are examining a document re. evaluation of whether an animal should be slaughtered. Vet. Ireland is to revert to DAF over the next month. There is a need to meet with the IFA and other farm organisations and to seek information regarding local agreement/arrangements from abattoirs. ICMSA stated that they are very much in favour of a protocol of this type.

Chairman stated that this was a positive development.

DAF agreed to provide details re. use of Captive Bolt Pistol on-farm, to all Council members following query from CIWF.

# FUR FARMING (SLAUGHTER OF MINK)

At the last meeting, CIWF raised concerns about the mass on-farm slaughter of fur animals in Ireland and at this meeting they showed a video of same taken on an Irish fur farm. Concern was expressed at the high number on animals enclosed per gassing cage. CIWF informed Council that it has submitted a list of questions to DAF for reply. Chairman stated that Council would like a response to these questions and that any issues arising could be brought to the attention of Council. CIWF agreed to prepare a document for Council on receipt of reply from DAF. CIWF inquired if Council would agree to take the matter further? Chairman agreed that there was a lot of concern at the table to events shown on video and that Council would take action based on information received from DAF.

# ELECTRO-IMMOBILISATION (EI)

DAF stated that a further evaluation on the use of EI was taking place within the Department and that the Minister would be making a decision in the next number of weeks. In response to a query from CIWF, DAF confirmed that Council would probably be notified before a public announcement.

# TRANSPORT

Secretary read out email received from DAF (copy in meeting folder) regarding tendering for provision of training which stated that ‘… *its is expected that the closing date for submissions will be end of April 2006*.’ TEAGASC said they were ready to move, also, UCD and FÁS, and DARDNI in conjunction with Greenmount College.

Chairman stated that Council would await outcome of tendering process.

# PROGRAMME FOR 2006

Chairman stated that to date no feedback had been received from members. He suggested that FAWAC could engage stakeholders to see what, if any, of their priorities agreed with those of Council. Council should start looking ahead and start planning for the next one to five years. Following a general discussion a number of items were highlighted as follows:

* Disbudding of calves,
* Tail-docking of pigs – could Council get presentation in light of current pig welfare,
* Education guidelines for the transport of horses,
* On-farm deaths,
* Exotic animals in Ireland and the possible impact on farm animals. ISPCA to present legislation with their recommendations as to how we should proceed,
* EU Animal Welfare Action Plan – should garner ideas as to what direction it should take.

Disbudding

It was agreed that the Education Sub-group could look at the whole area of disbudding calves and make recommendations to the Minister. CIWF to be involved with this work. TEAGASC confirmed that there is a lot of ongoing research in this area – there are gaps in the knowledge available. ISPCA agreed to do some research also and to circulate to sub-group before its next meeting.

EU Animal Welfare Action Plan

B Earley involved in welfare quality group. EU Commission had consultation process on the Internet and main groups were consulted. Results of consultation on Web - UCD to provide weblink to Secretary for circulation to members. EU has a programme. It would be important that DAF keep Council abreast of developments as they arise in drafts, e.g. as they go to working group, so that Council can have an input/flag problems/give DAF another perspective.

# A O B

**Visit by Chairman to Farm Animal Welfare Council, United Kingdom**

Chairman briefed Council of his visit to the Farm Animal Welfare Council in the United Kingdom (FAWC UK) on 27th January and stated that they would be interested in collaborating with this Council. Professor Christopher Wathes, Chairman, FAWC UK, would like to come and visit this Council and in this regard, Chairman asked if B Earley and A Hanlon could assist as hosts. It was agreed that we would forward details of our meeting schedule.

Prof. Wathes also expressed the view that the work of FAWAC, in its two years of existence, was impressive and was very complimentary regarding it. He asked that these sentiments be conveyed to Council.

FAWC UK referred to a meeting to be held in Germany this summer regarding animal welfare and that perhaps DAF/Council should send some members to it. Secretary to contact them regarding details. Chairman suggested that Council could send a number of representatives to that meeting.

**Export of Live Animals to the Lebanon**

CIWF queried if Irish animals are still being sent there following withdrawal of EU subsidies? DAF replied that it is very unlikely unless prices in the EU drop. CIWF expressed the view that Ireland/DAF could offer some assistance to the Lebanese Authorities regarding their abattoirs however DAF feels that this would be very difficult now that Ireland is not sending animals there for slaughter. It would be a matter for those countries still exporting to Lebanon.

 IFA expressed the view that Irish animals, which had been transported to a high standard of animal welfare, have been stopped only to be replaced by exports from countries whose welfare standards fall far short of our own. This was a retro-step in their view.

TEAGASC stated that they had been involved in scientific research into live shipping of animals from Ireland and have made a presentation to Brussels. Their research revealed that animals showed no adverse affects and had in fact gained weight. The EU was unaware of this research and TEAGASC are of the view that as such scientific research is available, it should be brought to the attention of the European Parliament. This research is due to be published in a scientific publication soon.

It was agreed that B Earley would brief Council of this research at the next meeting. It is very important as there are no other studies of this type. CIWF said serious welfare problems arise after animals arrive in the Lebanon.

Chairman agreed that CIWF could alert Council of any developments in this area.

**OIE – International Animal Welfare**

Vet. Ireland stated that the OIE are currently looking at international animal welfare. IFA expressed the view that the OIE should impose the same animal welfare criteria as currently apply to EU Member States, to other non-EU/3rd Countries with whom we trade. Beef produced in less than ideal welfare circumstances is allowed to be sold in Ireland.

 **Update on discussions with Islamic Cultural Centre Dublin (ICCD)**

Chair of this Sub-group confirmed that contact was ongoing and that he and Secretary are to meet with ICCD to discuss the modalities of making a visit to a slaughtering plant. Chairman stated that ICCD were good to give us such co-operation. He pointed out that FAWC UK would be interested in sharing their experience in this are with Council.

**Puppy Farming**

ISPCA expressed concern regarding the huge numbers of farmers diverting into puppy farming. They recently met with the Ulster Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and it is estimated that between 700-1000 puppies are being shipped via Northern Ireland every week. They also pointed out that breeders seeking to avoid legislative restrictions in other jurisdictions are re-locating to Ireland where there are none. This is causing serious welfare problems. DAF reported that this matter is still under consideration by a Working Group established by the Minister for Environment, Heritage, and Local Government (EHLG). Vet. Ireland pointed out that existing legislation allowed for the introduction of controls on dog breeding establishments but that this is a matter for EHLG.

 DARDNI expressed concern at the number of cruelty cases arising; there are three very serious prosecutions pending in Northern Ireland. Their Minister and Department are under pressure to look at this as part of their review of animal welfare legislation – there is a need for stiffer penalties for cruelty offences. The Animal Welfare Bill is going through the House of Commons in the UK and they would hope to use controls proposed in it to introduce new legislation in this area.

Secretary to liaise with S O’Laoide and B Bent regarding drafting of letter from Council to Minister for Agriculture and Food to Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

Meeting concluded with Chairman thanking all present for their input.