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

Venue: Fitzwilliam Hotel, Dublin.

Date: 27th April 2006.

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), K Kinsella (IFA), B Bent (WSPCA), C Connor (DARDNI), M A Bartlett (CIWF), D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), P Brangan (DAF), S O’Laoide (Vet. Ireland), L McCabe (ICMSA), B Earley (TEAGASC), T O’Donnell (DAF), A Hanlon (UCD), A McCarthy (ISPCA), J Bryan (IFA).

Apologies: M Blake (DAF) represented by P Brangan, T Doyle (ICOS), S Foley (CFILDEH&S),

Secretary: T O’Halloran.

Chairman welcomed all members.

# PRESENTATIONS

From Dr Bernadette Earley, TEAGASC as follows: -

* **Animal Transport – Live Shipping of Animals**

Objectives

* + To make physiological, haematological, immunological measurements and

behavioural measurements on the animals,

* + To quantify the effect of transport on the degree of stress imposed and the

performance of the animals over the study period, -To monitor and record the environmental conditions on the ship.

* **Animal Welfare Index**

Using a rating rather than tick box system. Research is ongoing over next three years and is being conducted in suckler/beef production system. On-farm welfare assessment can be used to quantify welfare e.g. it can be used to examine:-

* + Different husbandry systems,
  + Influence of individual resources, e.g. diet, housing,
  + Welfare assurances of certification schemes, e.g. a marketing scheme,
  + Policy – cross compliance.

Dr Earley pointed out that the OIE requests updates in animal welfare research and it is up to each body to communicate with them.

Each presentation was followed by a question and answer session. Chairman thanked

Dr Earley and wished her well with her research.

# MINUTES

Minutes adopted with 4 amendments.

# MATTERS ARISING

Chairman formally welcomed Mr L McCabe as ICMSA representative onto Council. Mr McCabe replaces Mr J Cahill.

It was agreed that Chairman would write on behalf of Council to Mr J Stack to thank him for his very active and positive contribution to the work of Council, its Education and Veterinary Sub-groups and to EWS.

CIWF sought clarification as to DAF’s position regarding the proposed EU Broiler Welfare Directive. It appears to them that some EU countries are trying to abandon it altogether because of Avian Flu outbreaks. DAF stated that the Directive is still at Working Group level and that Ireland supports the proposal - how it proceeds is a matter for all EU Member States.

Regarding the possibility of Council engaging with stakeholders to help raise public awareness of FAWAC publications, it was agreed that most stakeholders are represented at Council.

It was agreed that CIWF would engage with Chair of Education Sub-group regarding protocol for on-farm slaughter of animals.

It was agreed that fur would remain on the agenda.

It was agreed that Chairman would write to the Minister for Agriculture and Food thanking her for the favourable response to the proposal to ban the use of electro-immobilisation on farm animals in Ireland.

Programme for 2006 – no further feedback received from members however the following items were mentioned: -

* On-farm slaughter of animals/slaughter without stunning including review of EU Slaughter Directive,
* CIWF proposed mis-labelling of free-range eggs (but only if it comes within Terms of Reference)
* CIWF proposed fervent promotion of high welfare standards of Irish beef cattle reared on grass in Ireland as opposed to cattle reared in feedlots on the continent,
* Laying Hens,
* Pig Welfare,
* Transport of calves – DAF might give a presentation to Council.

It was agreed that invitation would issued to Chairman, Farm Animal Welfare Council, UK, to address Council at its July 2006 meeting.

Regarding ritual slaughter without stunning, Chair of this Sub-group confirmed that discussions with the Islamic Cultural Centre Dublin are ongoing and it is hoped to visit a Halal slaughtering plant in Co Offaly in the very near future.

Chairman read out details of letter received from Minister for Agriculture and Food in response to his letter to her of 23rd March regarding puppy farms. It was agreed that a further letter would issue to the Minister requesting her to convey to her colleague the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Councils concern regarding attacks on livestock which can be a serious welfare matter, education programme in schools highlighting responsibilities attaching to dog ownership, introduction of compulsive micro-chipping for dogs, increase in number of dog wardens, and finally, increase in resources for control of dogs.

# FARM ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION GUIDELINES

Chair of this Sub-group reported that three meetings had been convened since Council last met. Group had discussed disbudding and de-horning of cattle. They received presentations from the Irish Cattle Breeders’ Federation on genetics. They also received a presentation from CIWF who have looked at situation prevailing in UK regarding the use of local anaesthetics at time of de-horning. It was agreed that current legislation would need to be looked at with regard to prohibition on sale of horned animals at livestock marts. It was also agreed the CIWF would be co-opted onto this group for duration of disbudding/de-horning discussions.

Group is also looking at on-farm slaughter of casualty animals.

# WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)

Chair of this Sub-group reported that five meetings had taken place since Council last met – one of the Steering Group and one in each of the four regions. A robust exchange of views took place and members discussed how they had tackled the problems that arose. Some of the issues raised will have to be brought back to the next meeting of the Steering Group for discussion. It is proposed to invite a number of other agencies, which may be in a position to assist. These are representatives from An Garda Síochána, Veterinary Ireland, and the Local Authorities Veterinary Officers’ Association. All of the EWS groups have worked well together and it is a tribute to their commitment particularly as the winter had been a long and hard one.

ISPCA said that it is very important that problems are resolved over the summer period.

# FUR FARMING (SLAUGHTER OF MINK)

CIWF expressed concern at the lack of availability of basic information regarding fur farming in Ireland. This poses a difficulty when trying to make a welfare judgement. Regarding list of questions submitted by CIWF to DAF for reply, CIWF stated that reply to some questions remained outstanding and it was agreed that these would be re-submitted through Secretary for reply. CIWF agreed to prepare a paper for Council.

Veterinary Ireland confirmed that they are presently engaging with the fur industry regarding welfare.

Chairman agreed that Council could be kept informed by CIWF through its engagement with DAF, Veterinary Ireland through its engagement with the fur industry and DAF through reports received from its inspectors.

# PIG WELFARE

A general discussion took place regarding current practices in the pig industry particularly with regard to poor environment enrichment and other practices such as teeth clipping and tail docking. Treatment of Postweaning Multisystemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS) was also mentioned.

DAF pointed out that they had produced a booklet for pig farmers entitled ‘Pig Welfare Requirements’ and is also providing a grant-aided scheme towards housing. Also, it has run training courses recently through TEAGASC, to allow farmers and handlers to meet their regulatory obligations. DAF also carried regular welfare inspections of pig rearing systems.

Chairman stated that perhaps these issues might be addressed through the Education Sub-group and it was agreed that they should look at the DAF booklet as well as the Northern Ireland Code of Recommendations for the Welfare of Livestock: Pigs.

IFA stated that they would provide expertise to the Sub-group from their Pig Committee. TEAGASC also agreed to provide same.

# ELECTRO-IMMOBILISATION (EI)

It was agreed that Chairman would write to thank Professor Michael Monaghan, Chairman, Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare, and also to seek clarification as to availability of report for FAWAC webpage and to the public generally.

# PROGRAMME FOR 2006

It was agreed that Secretary would circulate revised Programme.

# A O B

**Import of Dogs**

DARDNI wished to thank DAF colleagues for assistance in helping to seize a breed of dog whose import into Northern Ireland is illegal but whose import into Ireland is not. DARDNI stated that it would seek harmonisation of banned breeds through the North/South Animal Welfare Working Group forum.

**Exotic Birds**

The regulation of the sale of exotic birds was also raised following publication of an article in a Sunday newspaper. DAF is to revert to Council on the matter. It was agreed Exotic Animal legislation be included in the 2006 Programme.

**CIWF/FAWAC Link**

CIWF sought permission to have a link on their website to that of FAWAC. Secretary to seek DAF advice on the matter.

Meeting concluded with Chairman thanking all present for their contribution, particularly Ms B Earley.

Chairman also asked members to think beyond 2006 Programme.

Next meeting 12th July 2006.