# Minutes of the Twenty Sixth Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Venue:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise, Co Laois.

Date: 11th July 2007.

Present: P Fottrell (Chairman), D Ryan (DAF) S Foley (CILDEHS), S O’Laoide, (Vet. Ireland), A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett CIWF), K Kinsella (IFA), L McCabe (ICMSA), D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), M Blake (DAF), B Earley (TEAGASC), R Kennedy (IFA), A McCarthy (ISPCA), J Bryan (IFA), C Connor (DARDNI),

**Apologies:** T Doyle (ICOS).

**Secretary:** T O’Halloran.

Chairman welcomed everyone. He congratulated Mr Tom O’Donnell (DAF) on his retirement, and thanked him for his tremendous work and input into Council, especially his chairmanship of EWS. Mr Dermot Ryan replaces Mr O’Donnell.

# PRESENTATION

***‘Animal Welfare Index – beef suckler farms’*** by Dr Bernadette Earley, TEAGASC Grange Research Centre, Meath. Dr Earley claimed that the biggest driver re. animal welfare is to address animal health and the next step would be to put economics on both.

A full discussion took place following the presentation. Reference was made to the possibility that this type of research could link in with the following: European Food Safety Authority risk assessment module; EU farmers competing with cheap imports from countries with lower animal health and welfare standards; taste and quality of food; food labelling; organic production; the price consumers are prepared to pay for higher animal welfare standards.

It was suggested that Mr Gerard Shorthall, TEAGASC, be invited to address Council on possible organic links to this research.

Findings to be published in *Animal Welfare Research Journal* and it was agreed that Council be kept informed of progress by Dr Earley.

Chairman expressed his thanks to Dr Earley.

1. **MINUTES**

Minutes adopted with six amendments.

1. **MATTERS ARISING**

***Halal Slaughter***

Chair of this sub-group has been invited to address Meat Industry Ireland on 17th July, with a view to seeking premises in which to demonstrate the use of the stun assurance monitor to ICCD. It is also hoped that a local authority plant will be available soon.

**FARM ANIMAL WELFARE EDUCATION SUB-GROUP**

***Education Guidelines***

Chair of this sub-group reported that it is hoped to bring the draft guidelines on broiler welfare to conclusion soon, following which, it is hoped to produce guidelines for pigs. It was agreed that CIWF would address the sub-group to outline some of its concerns regarding pig welfare. It was also agreed to issue an invitation to Ms Niamh O’Connell, Northern Ireland, who recently spoke at a UCD animal welfare seminar.

***On-Farm Slaughter***

DAF and Vet. Irl. are working on a draft Protocol/Guidelines for farmers and Private Veterinary Practitioners (PVP). Discussions are on going.

Chairman suggested that Council review this issue at the September meeting to see how they are progressing.

1. **WORKING GROUP ON CO-OPERATION (EWS)**

Chair of this sub-group reported. He is currently undertaking a review of EWS and will report its findings back to Council at the next meeting. The Steering group continues to liaise with the Health Service Executive, An Garda Síochána and also Veterinary Ireland, with a view to making Private Veterinary Practitioners more aware of EWS.

It was agreed that DAF would provide Council with details of the number of animals slaughtered as a result of farm animal welfare cases.

It was also noted that Ms Elizabeth O’Flynn, Veterinary Ireland would be available to address Council at the September meeting.

Chair also briefed Council on the commitments to animal welfare under the *Programme for Government 2007-2012.* A general discussion followed. Reference was also made to the Animal Health and Welfare Bills currently being drafted by both DAF and DARDNI.

Letter from FAWC UK re. *Opinion on Policy Instruments for Improving Animal Welfare* was noted.

1. **HORSE WELFARE SUB-GROUP**

This sub-group proposes to hold its first meeting with Mr Damian McDonald, Chief Executive of Horse Sport Ireland, on 25th July. A number of issues of concern have been identified and it is proposed to put these forward for discussion.

1. **FUR FARMING**

A full discussion took place on the two reports produced by Veterinary Ireland and the Department of Agriculture and Food respectively. Representatives of both groups stated that they would not like selective use to be made of their reports.

CIWF queried what scientific research is available on the slaughter of mink and fox and asked if the two reports could be referred to the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW) in DAF for a view?

It was agreed that Council would write to SACAHW to enquire if they are aware of any research onto the slaughter of mink and fox, and if so, to provide summaries of any research carried out to date to Council.

1. **EURO FARM ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL**

Mr S O’Laoide represents FAWAC at these meetings and gave Council a review of the documents circulated by EuroFAWC.

It was agreed that Council would issue an invitation to Mr D Pritchard, FAWC UK to attend a FAWAC meeting in the near future.

Chairman thanked Mr O’Laoide for representing Council.

1. **AOB**

***Emergency Slaughter of Casualty Animals***

DARDNI representative advised Council that the definition of casualty animal in food hygiene rules has been changed, now being confined to injured animals.

***Disbudding/de-horning animals***

Vet. Irl. stated that there is still considerable resistance to the proposed EI ban, and suggested that more needed to be done to encourage early intervention and also the administration of painkillers during these procedures. DAF agreed to take these suggestions on board.

CIWF enquired if Council could call for a de-horning ban and for a move to dis-budding only? Other members of Council agreed that disbudding needed to be incentivised by DAF. DAF responded that this could possibly be considered under the proposed Suckler Cow Welfare Scheme

Chairman stated that this should be kept under review.

***CIWF Paper on Calf Exports***

CIWF gave a presentation on a paper prepared by them and circulated earlier via the Secretary. CIWF’s paper looked at ways of improving dairy calf welfare and encouraging the use of calves from the dairy industry in beef production instead of exporting live calves.

Following discussion, it was agreed that TEAGASC would respond to the CIWF paper.

It was also agreed that this item be on the agenda for the next meeting.

***Next meeting: Wednesday 19th September 2007.***