# Minutes of the Thirty-Third Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

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

Date: 26th November 2008.

Present: Professor Patrick Fottrell (Chairman), Heber McMahon (DAFF), Sean O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), Stephen Foley (CILDEHS), Alison Hanlon (UCD), Barbara Bent (WSPCA), Mary-Anne Bartlett (CIWF), Michael Doran (IFA), Mark Beazley (ISPCA), Dermot Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), Martin Blake (DAFF), Tom Doyle (ICOS), Dr. Bernadette Earley (TEAGASC), Colette Connor (DARDNI).

**Apologies:** Richard Kennedy (IFA), Kevin Kinsella (IFA).

**Secretary:** Tom Farrell.

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting. He also welcomed Patricia Kelly, Veterinary Inspector (DAFF) who would be addressing the meeting later.

1. **MINUTES**

The minutes with amendments were agreed.

1. **MATTERS ARISING**

Animal Health and Welfare Bill.

DAFF advised the group that in line with the Ministers commitment it was proposed to meet with organisations to discuss their submissions, The consultation phase will conclude in early January and arrangements will then proceed with drafting of the legislation having regard to all comments received.

1. **Report from the Working Group on the Early Warning and Intervention System for Animal Welfare Cases (EWS),**

DAFF gave an over view on the regional meetings that had taken place recently. Equine issues and the possibility of fodder shortages were the main issues being voiced. DAFF are currently conducting a review of EWS - from the reviews received to date the main points are,

* EWS working well in many counties
* The initiative should be furthered developed
* PVP’s and LA Vet’s should be involved
* Methods for dealing with repeat offenders are a problem

 There was a general acceptance among the council members that EWS should continue to operate on an informal basis.

 **Report from Education Sub-group,**

The Chairman of the Education Working-group stated that the drafting of the guidelines booklet on a “Code of practice for the Welfare of Pigs” is progressing well.

He stated that CIWF gave a presentation at their last meeting, and that the next presentation will be from Brendan Lynch from Teagasc.

Council queried if the ‘Codes of Practice’ could become regulatory, as in England and Scotland. Council also asked what percentage of pigs are provided with environmental enriched material, and whether relevant statistics are available. DAFF advised that a code of practice would not form part of legislation and advised that herd owners are making efforts to have environmental enriched material available to pigs, however, while DAFF inspect premises statistical data is not collected on this issue.

Chairman of the Education Working-group stated that these issues may be researched further.

1. **Review of On-farm slaughter**

DET&E had advised that DAFF are required to get sanction from the European Commission to introduce a mark/stamp for carcasses of animals euthanased on farm and subsequently used in the national food chain in line with the ‘Guidance for Veterinary Practitioners and Farmers on managing acutely injured livestock on farm’. This process will take three months. It is envisaged that it will be mid February before the matter is finalised.

DAFF stated that until the EU process of approving the mark is finalized existing procedures would continue to apply.

1. **Report from Equine Welfare Sub-group**

Seán O’Laoide as Chairman of the Equine Welfare working-group, addressed the Council on the Sub-groups most recent meeting, the following issues were raised.

* The number of horses being sold is low.
* No legal link between passport and owner of microchip - need a system to change and track ownership.
* Only one factory currently dealing with slaughtering of equines.
* Horse Board Ireland should consider opening a factory for Pet food and request DAFF’s approval of same.
* Request DAFF to write to Local Authorities in relation to stray horses.

WSPCA and ISPCA echoed a number of these concerns and stated that additional areas of concern include;

* L.A.’s have power to seize equines if they are on the road but if in a field or council ground it is difficult to get L.A.’s to get involved,
* The expected increase in equine welfare calls as owners become increasingly unable to meet the costs of keeping their animals, and
* The lack of capacity in local authority horse pounds.

ISPCA gave the following statistics for equine welfare calls relating to the significant increase on last year.

Equines 2007 total; **324**

Equines up to end of October 2008; **400**

Calls passed to Inspectors 2007 total; **1237**

Calls to Inspectors up to end of October 2008; **1341**

Chairman of the Working-group stated that Local Authorities have limited resources to deal with the problem on the ground. DAFF advised that €2m was provided to LA’s in 2008 for the control of horses.

1. **Review on Fur Farming,**

Chairman stated, the SACAHW report was adopted in principal by the Council members and comments were invited, there were two submissions received from CIWF and IFBA. These submissions will be forwarded to the Chairman of the SACAHW for consideration. The agreed report can then be forwarded to the Minister when finalised.

Chairman stated that this would conclude FAWAC’s current involvement in Fur Farming issues, however CIWF wished to have the issue of on-farm fur conditions for fur animals added to the agenda.

1. **Report from Ritual Slaughter Sub-group,**

Veterinary Ireland stated that they are still awaiting the availability of the Slaughter Plant to demonstrate the Stun Assurance Monitor (SAM). This issue is currently being discussed at EU Council and working-group meetings may finalise within the next six months

CIWF enquired whether there is any impediment to a Member State introducing their own labelling indicating that meat had been ritually slaughtered. Veterinary Ireland concluded that he will make enquires.

## FAWAC Website

The Secretary gave a presentation on the work been carried out on the FAWAC Website.

He envisaged the updated website should be up and running by the next meeting.

Council approved the proposed changes and thanked him for his on-going work.

1. **AOB**

# Masters in Veterinary Medicine

The Chairman invited Patricia Kelly Veterinary Inspector (DAFF) to address the meeting.

Patricia introduced herself, and spoke briefly about her background. Patricia is undertaking a study for a Masters in Veterinary Medicine on 'Refining Current Systems of Early Warning and Prevention of On-Farm Animal Welfare Incidents'. Patricia is funded by DAFF. The objective of her research is to better understand risk factors associated with on-farm animal deaths, which may provide opportunities to refine current systems of early warning and prevention. She would like to participate in a stakeholder workshop to encourage participation from a broad range of relevant stakeholders and to identify a range of factors (social, physical, psychological, regulatory etc.) that may be related to the problem of on-farm deaths.

DARD was very interested in this initiative, because they are about to roll out a similar initiative, they will put Patricia in touch with a colleague in relation to her studies.

Council thanked Patricia for her presentation.

# Tail Docking

CIWF asked DAFF, to provide figures on the tail docking of pigs.

DAFF advised that statistical data on tail docking is not collected.

# Schedule of 2009 meetings

Council approved the Schedule of meetings for 2009.

## Next meeting

The next Council meeting is on the 18th February 2009.

## Conclusion

Chairman thanked the Council Members for their tremendous work during the year, Chairman also made reference to the report from the Food and Veterinary Mission group that made a comment of the good work on Animal Welfare through FAWAC. He also thanked the support from DAFF in their work with FAWAC.

In the interim, the Chairman would consult with DAFF in relation to priorities for 2009.

CIWF expressed that Council Members should have an input in the priorities for 2009.

It was agreed that if Council Members have any suggestions for priorities in 2009, they should forward them to the Secretary.

## END