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

**Location:** Portlaoise

Date: 29th April 2009

Present: Professor P Fottrell (Chairman), B Farrell (DAFF), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), S Foley (CILDEHS), A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett (CIWF), M Doran (IFA), D Sparrow (Vet. Ireland), N O’Nuallain (DAFF), T Doyle (ICOS), B Earley (TEAGASC), K Kinsella (IFA), N Byers (ICMSA)

Apologies: R Kennedy (IFA), C Connor (DARDNI), M Blake (DAFF), H McMahon (DAFF), M Beazley (ISPCA), T Farrell (DAFF)

Secretary: I Dunne

Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting including Nigel Byers, ICMSA who, Council was advised is replacing Lorcan McCabe on the Council. Chairman also advised of the resignation from the FAWAC of Mark Beazley, ISPCA who was leaving to take up a new position. Chairman thanked Mark for his participation and positive contribution to FAWAC.

# 1. Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of 18th February 2009 adopted with two amendments.

# 2. Matters Arising

Battery Cages, statistics on the industry were reported on by DAFF in relation to a previous request from CIWF. CIWF stated that they had some concerns in relation to the Laying Hens Directive and it was agreed that these concerns should be raised directly with DAFF.

# 3. Report on the Early Warning/Intervention System for Animal Welfare Cases (EWS)

DAFF reported on the completion of the 2008 EWS Review. Generally there was a high degree of satisfaction countrywide with the way it was working. DAFF updated Council on its discussion with the HSE on animal welfare cases with social dimensions. A number of meetings have been held to develop contact points for HSE officials and DAFF Veterinary personnel. The objective of the EWS/HSE initiative is to enable DAFF Veterinary Inspectors (VIs) who, in the course of investigating animal welfare incidents are of the opinion that the incidents are arising partly because of the poor health/welfare of the farmer, to liase with the HSE and seek assistance for the farmer. The HSE and DVOs have agreed to operate a pilot project in the three counties of Sligo, Mayo and Offaly.

ISPCA reiterated its concern on the problem of repeat offenders and suggested that ways of resolving the issue should be examined. CILDEHS expressed its concern on the withdrawal of state funding from the Fallen Animal Scheme. Veterinary Irl, IFA, ISPCA and ICOS all agreed that the extra costs involved for farmers in the disposal of animals could create difficulties resulting in potential welfare and environmental issues.

# 4. Report from Education Working Group (Pig Welfare)

Chairman of the sub-group stated that a draft document on a ‘Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs’ would be ready shortly for circulation to FAWAC. He advised Council that the Group’s findings in relation to environmental enrichment is that further research is required in this area. Teagasc stated that there could be funding available for research under its Walsh Fellowship Scheme. CIWF stated that the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) had researched this area in depth and expressed concern that by Council advocating more research it suggested to CIWF that EFSA’s findings are not being accepted. Chairman agreed that the EFSA research was very valuable. He went on to say that the material available between countries varies and more research is needed to find materials that will work in an Irish situation. It was agreed that Teagasc should explore the possibility of funding for research from the Walsh Fellowship Scheme.

Concerns were expressed by the IFA about the possibility of FAWAC Guideline Booklets being used in legal situations. Council’s view is that the Guideline Booklets are not intended for use as legal instruments in prosecution cases Chairman commended the sub-groups for their work and expressed his appreciation to them on behalf of Council.

# 5. On-farm slaughter

DAFF stated that the protocol on Guideline Booklet for Veterinary Practitioners and Farmers on Managing Acutely Injured Livestock on Farm is nearing completion.

# 6. Report from Equine Welfare Liaison Group

The Equine Group advised that Horse Racing Ireland is currently working on a document similar to the brochure being launched by the Irish Thoroughbred Association, as outlined at the previous Council meeting. It is proposed to arrange a further meeting with all stakeholders to look again at the issues of concern, including transfer of ownership, traceability and lack of slaughter facilities. It was agreed that Joe Collins, UCD, together with DAFF officials from the relevant areas, should be invited to a future FAWAC meeting to update Council on relevant issues.

# 7. Ritual Slaughter

Veterinary Ireland advised Council that agreement had been reached with the owner of a plant in the Midlands to organise a demonstration of the Stun Assurance Monitor programme.

# 8. Fur Farming

CIWF addressed Council on a CIWF document which had been distributed to members at a previous meeting entitled ‘Animal welfare concerns regarding on-farm conditions for fur animals’ which summarises the plight of fur animals. CIWF said that there are now only five licenced mink farms together with one fox farm and suggested that FAWAC seek to ban all other forms of fur farming apart from mink. The Chairman stated that Council had tried to address the issue, notwithstanding the fact that fur farming remains a legitimate farming activity. CIWF stated that they would like an opinion from the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare on current housing for mink. Chairman said this request could be looked at further. Council agreed that the issue of fur farming would be revisited at a future date.

# 9. Priorities 2009

***9.1 Genomics/Animal breeding potential impact on Animal Welfare***

A meeting of Teagasc, Universities and industry researchers took place in April 2009 with the objective being to summarise the resources each body had and to develop an integrative research framework among research bodies that would deliver profit, through breeding, to the Irish Agri-Food industry.  Veterinary Ireland expressed the view that animal welfare issues could be reduced as a consequence of the application of Genomics. It was agreed that a representative from Teagasc would be invited to a future meeting to address Council on Genomics.

***9.2 Explore educational welfare initiatives for farmed animals***

FAWAC consider that young people should be taught an awareness of animal welfare at a young age and this could be addressed through including animal welfare as a subject on the schools curriculum programme at both primary level and transition year. A committee member said that provision for ‘an animal welfare goes to school programme’ was included in the Austrian Animal Health and Welfare Bill and suggested that Council could seek information on it. The Chairman agreed that this programme could be worthwhile exploring.

# 10. AOB

***10.1 Guidelines for Laying Hens***

CIWF requested that it be co-opted onto the Education Sub-group when the guidelines for laying hens were being drawn up. The Chairman replied that the Chairman of that group could consider how CIWF can provide an input to the guidelines when the project was being undertaken.

***10.2 FAWAC Annual Review 2008***

Comments are to be returned to DAFF on the annual review within the next two weeks.

***10.3 Future FAWAC Meetings***

The Chairman proposed that as a means of addressing the current budgetary situation that the number of meetings be reduced from five to four in 2009. This was agreed. He suggested that the Secretary could notify Council members by e-mail of any relevant issues that may arise between meetings.

***10.4 New FAWAC Website***

DAFF said there were some teething problems with the layout of the new FAWAC website which would be resolved shortly.

***10.5 Resignation of Council Member Dermot Sparrow, Veterinary Ireland***

Mr. Dermot Sparrow informed Council that he regrettably was tendering his resignation from the FAWAC for personal reasons. The Chairman expressed his regret at Dermot’s departure, thanked him for his contribution to the work of the FAWAC and wished him well in the future. The Chairman of the Education Working Group also thanked Dermot for the enormous amount of work he contributed to that Group and said that his knowledge and practical experience would be difficult to replace. DAFF and IFA representatives also extended thanks to Dermot and wished him well in the future.

## *10.6 Next meeting*

The next Council meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 9th September 2009.

Chairman thanked all for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

END