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

Location: Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 27th May 2010

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, M Blake (DAFF), B Farrell (DAFF), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), L O’Flynn (Vet Ireland), A Hanlon (UCD), B Bent (WSPCA), M A Bartlett (CIWF), M Doran (IFA), R Doyle (ICOS), B Earley (TEAGASC), N Byers (ICMSA)

Apologies: Kevin Kinsella (IFA), C Connor (DARDNI)

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 11th March 2010 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

## Animals in Transit

* DAFF said that they checked with the division responsible (i.e. Transport Div) and nothing had been received in relation to the matter from the French Authorities or the FVO. The matter was also followed up through the Embassy in Paris who confirmed that it had received no information. DAFF said that there are people employed to check all documents in assembly centres and evidence must be shown of a pre-booking at a control point in France. DAFF are satisfied that a robust system of controls is in place at assembly centres. CIWF expressed disappointment at DAFF response to alleged breaches in the area of transport.
* DAFF added that it can be difficult to follow up all reports when many erroneous allegations are made.

### Pig Welfare Booklet

* CIWF asked if there had been any feedback on the FAWAC Pig Welfare Booklet. Vet Ireland and DAFF said that as yet there has been no formal feedback.

# Education Sub-Group

* The Committee is currently drafting a booklet on the Welfare of Laying Hens. The IFA representatives are Gordon McConkey (Intensive Systems) and John Brady (Alternative Systems) The booklet will also deal with backyard flocks CIWF confirmed that it will make a presentation to the Committee.
* It is anticipated that the booklet will be published at an early date. DAFF confirmed that the new Poultry Welfare Scheme which provides €16m to poultry producers to assist in conversion to enriched cages, free range or barn system will be introduced over the coming month.

# Early Warning System

* DAFF have been continuing with the roll-out in a number of counties of the EWS initiative involving the HSE and Local Development Companies (LDC). While the EWS operates in all counties, the initiative involving the HSE and LDCs has been extended to the following counties: Longford, Leitrim, Wexford, Monaghan and Limerick. Involvement of other stakeholder groups provide farmers with the opportunity to avail of services to assist with social and human health issues that can sometimes be associated with cases of animal welfare. HSE are examining the possibility of offering suicide assist programs to participants in the EWS. The initiative continues to be positively received from all participants. Number of reported animal welfare cases remains static and while the IFA and the ISPCA provide assistance, the majority of cases continue to be dealt with by DAFF veterinary inspectors.
* The annual EWS Steering Group meeting was held in June. While it is generally accepted that the initiative is working well there are in IFA’s view a limited number of problems involving unregistered calves and the IFA would welcome assistance from DVOs in these cases. DAFF said that DVO officials are actively involved in resolving these issues. Farmers were also reminded to have adequate supply of fodder in stock to feed animals over the coming winter months.

# Equine Welfare Liaison Group

* The Farming Independent was complimented for its article on horses (13th of April 2010) entitled ‘Time to Say Goodbye to the Oldies’. <http://www.independent.ie/farming/time-to-say-goodbye-to-the-oldies-2135217.html>
  + The clear message being provided is that there is no market for many types of horses.
* Change of Ownership is an area that needs to be addressed as there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that owners are withholding documents to avoid being linked with a horse in the future.
  + ISPCA said that it is difficult for them to take responsibility for thoroughbreds, as the cost of registration is prohibitive. DAFF in response said it is examining the issue of registration of equine holdings but accepts that the large number of issuing bodies is an issue and also the fact that the industry is divided into a number of distinct groups who do not always coalesce.
* ISPCA said that the problem for the thoroughbred industry is that horses are being sold down the line and ending up in the wrong hands at a low level and suggested that the horse industry provide funding to assist with the disposal of these horses. An added problem is that there are syndicate owners who due to the economic downturn are no longer in a position to pay the fees associated with keeping a horse.
* Chairman asked the Equine Welfare Liaison Group to convene a meeting to address horse welfare issues and report back to him on the matter. Council members were reminded of the forthcoming launch in UCD on the 3rd of June 2010 of the report entitled ‘Challenges and Solutions to Support Good Equine Welfare Practice in Ireland’.
* DAFF said that they are currently reviewing theoperation of the Control of Horses Act 1996 in conjunction with the Local Authorities.

1. **Cross –Border Stakeholder Event**

* The Cross Border Stakeholder Event on the Delivery of the All-Island Animal Health and Welfare Strategy was held in the Slieve Russell Hotel on the 12th of April 2010. FAWAC was represented by Sean O’Laoide.
* Members were reminded of the high level of on-going cross-border co-operation on animal health and welfare matters and the presence of a DARDNI representative on FAWAC assists in this cooperation.
* The issue of cross border transport was highlighted and it was accepted that free movement can only take place if there is similar animal health and welfare standards across both jurisdictions.
* Teagasc announced that it has received three Walsh Fellowships for collaborative work with Northern Ireland. These are in the areas of Bluetongue, a calf vaccine to prevent pneumonia and a joint research application. The Chairman congratulated Teagasc on its achievement in this area.

# AOB

## Cloning

* The SACAHW reviewed the EFSA report. The main findings were circulated to the Council members.
* The Chairman thanked Prof Monaghan and the members of the committee for their work in reviewing the report.

## Animal Health and Welfare Bill

* DAFF said that the draft heads of the bill are nearing finalisation.
* CIWF asked if the bill will be based on the Scottish AH&W Bill and DAFF confirmed that the principles of the five freedoms will be included in the bill.

## Slaughter Without Stunning

* Vet Ireland commenting on the adoption of the European Council Regulation on protection of animals at time of killing, which has an implementation date of 2013 said this might provide an opportunity to progress the pre-stunning issue.

*On-Farm Slaughter*

* The IFA said that the recent legislation and FAWAC Guidelines on managing acutely injured animals on farm is not working as envisaged and the number of cases in which it has operated in practice is limited. While it is being offered as a solution to a problem faced by farmers, the reality on the ground is different.
* The IFA asked that a meeting with the relevant stakeholders be convened by DAFF to resolve the issue.
* Vet Ireland agreed it would be beneficial to meet with Meat Industry Ireland to discuss the matter.
* DAFF said that the protocol has been infrequently used but has worked at times.

*Dairy Cow*

* Teagasc are currently involved in addressing issues associated with this issue and have secured funding (Marie Curie) to conduct research in this area. Teagasc has also developed a link with a group in Belgium that is researching the dairy cow and is working on a joint Teagasc/Grange Moorepark initiative.

*Live Export*

* CIWF referred to recent reports on the recommencement of live cattle exports to the Middle-East. CIWF has concerns on animal welfare standards in the Middle East destinations.
* Reference was made to a report by ‘Animals Australia’ which documented abuses of Australian animals transported to the Middle East. Teagasc said that it conducted a study in 2005 and found no welfare issues. The care of animals on the ship was excellent and on arrival in port the animals went directly to the ‘buyer’s ring’. Teagasc had no remit to follow the animals beyond the port.
* CIWF said it has evidence of OIE standards not being met.
* The Chairman advised that we have no control over welfare standards outside the EU and suggested that it might be possible to include an education element in trade agreements.
  + Members agreed with this approach and accept that while there are OIE Guidelines, such guidelines are at times difficult to enforce. An EU funded education programme might be worth examining.
* CIWF said that some trade from Australia has been limited to certain approved slaughterhouses in the Middle-East.
  + Teagasc said that there are good quality slaughterhouses in this area.

*Equine Regulation 504/2008*

* Vet Ireland raised the issue of the 6 month registration deadline on horses without passports being allowed into the food chain and said it would be helpful if this could be extended. In response DAFF said the issue is being examined.

*EU Internet Debate*

* CIWF referred to the EU internet debate inviting submissions on the future of CAP.

**END**