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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 30th September 2010

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, M Blake (DAFF), B Carpenter (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), J Turner (ICMSA), Kevin Kinsella (IFA).

Apologies: C Connor (DARDNI), N Byers (ICMSA)

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 27th May 2010 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* DAFF will organise a presentation on the subject of Animal Transport for the next meeting in November.
* CIWF expressed concern at lack of progress re slaughter without stunning and asked when the SACAHAW Opinion will be completed.

# Education Sub Group

* The Chairman of the sub-group reported good progress being made in drafting the guideline booklet on Laying Hens. CIWF made a presentation to the group. The group also met with An Bord Bia to discuss dissemination of information. The use of audiovisual aids for training new staff in the industry is also being examined and UCD is assisting with this aspect.
* DAFF said that €16 million has been made available under the Poultry Welfare Scheme for poultry producers to assist in the conversion to enriched, free range or barn systems. Some applications have been received to date and many producers are still in the planning stage.
* DAFF said that the European Commission is getting involved in the matter of Welfare education. This is a new venture by the Commission and DAFF will monitor developments. Vet Ireland said that Austria has a programme of welfare education at school. CIWF proposed that a representative from Austria make a presentation to the Council on the subject of advancements in Animal Welfare. CIWF will contact DAFF on this issue before the next meeting.
* The IFA expressed concern at the current direction of EU Animal Welfare policy which in its view will result in a drop in production levels in Europe with the shortfall being made up from cheaper imports from third countries, produced in a less welfare friendly environment. It is difficult to monitor the welfare conditions in countries outside the EU. The IFA see this as a contradiction in European policy, which requires EU Member States to produce to a certain standard while at the same time allowing the importation (from third countries) of the same products regardless of welfare standards applying therein. Vet Ireland said that Third Countries must comply with Animal Health standards and Food Safety standards. However Animal Welfare is not part of either. DAFF noted that while competition does come from outside the EU for some products that with regard to the laying hen/egg industry DAFF pointed out that the biggest competition to this sector is from within the EU itself.
* UCD made the point that consumer education is an important aspect of this. Consumers need to be made aware of the fact that welfare standards are higher in EU countries than outside the EU, and that this in turn results in a greater benefit a fact that could be conveyed to the general public through consumer education. UCD suggested Bord Bia could be approached on this issue.

# EWS

* DAFF said that they are in discussions with Pobal to extend their involvement outside the five counties currently in the programme. It is hoped to extend HSE involvement too. However, resource issues may arise with both of these.
* Anecdotal evidence would suggest that fodder will not be an issue this year. The IFA agreed with this.
* The ISPCA asked if the restructuring of DVOs will have much effect. DAFF said it did not believe it would as the same veterinary and technical staff are in place and it is hoped to continue to utilise the expertise of those other stakeholders in the local areas. (IFA Reps, Vet Practitioners etc.)

# Equine Welfare

* UCD launched the report ‘Challenges and Solutions to Support Good Equine Welfare practice in Ireland’ There has been good feedback on this publication. <http://www.veterinaryireland.ie/Links/PDFs/UCD_EquineWelfare_Report.pdf>
* At a meeting of the Equine Sub-Group it was impressed upon the industry that it needs to take the lead in providing solutions to prevailing horse welfare problems. The industry has set up a working group and is to report by the end of October.
* The ISPCA and Vet Ireland raised the issue of the legislation relating to horse slaughter for human consumption. There is a demand for horses for human consumption at present and it is difficult to fill because of the strict laws in place. Vet Ireland indicated that residue testing could be used to address a number of the issues involved. DAFF said that the EU Regulation is binding. There are currently no derogations for residue testing. The IFA said that they would support any movement on this issue. There are a number of horses that would be sent to slaughter if the price was right. DAFF said that horse welfare is a growing issue. The Oireachtas Joint Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Food met recently with DAFF officials to discuss the matter. DAFF is also working with Local Authorities to improve the implementation of the Control of Horses Act. It is accepted that a multi-agency approach is needed to tackle this issue.
* Vet Ireland said that DECHRA Veterinary Products have issued a leaflet in the UK on microchipping of horses and have offered to adapt this for Ireland at no cost. The Chairman said that this would need to be viewed by the Council before any decision could be made.

# FVO Report

* CIWF raised the FVO “General Audit Ireland – 2008” report (published August 2010). CIWF would like assurances that these issues have been sorted out.
* The Chairman advised that this matter should be discussed after members have had an opportunity to read it in detail.

# Cow Tail Docking

* CIWF said that they are receiving an increasing number of queries re tail docking.
* DAFF said that this practice has been banned since 2003. From recollection there have only been two cases found since then. DAFF stressed that if anybody has information on breaches of the law, they should inform the Department immediately so that these can be investigated.
* The IFA said that there is extensive enforcement on farms with over 8,500 farms inspected each year and that this had not materialised as an issue.

# AOB

* UCD said that it is currently involved in a pilot study investigating tail docking of pigs going to slaughter. The data from this will be submitted to the November Council meeting for discussion.
* The IFA expressed concern at the recent attack on the mink farm in Donegal, this was supported by all Council members.
* CIWF have written a summary of the EFSA report on Broiler Breeders. This will be circulated before the next meeting.