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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

## Date: 11th March 2010

## Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, 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), T Doyle (ICOS), M Blake (DAFF), Kevin Kinsella (IFA) C Connor (DARDNI), M Murray (TEAGASC)

## Apologies: B Earley (TEAGASC)

## Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

## Guest Speaker: Laura Boyle (TEAGASC)

1. **Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting**

Minutes of the meeting of 25th November 2009 were adopted with changes.

1. **Matters Arising**

### Forced Moulting

DAFF said it had written to all broiler breeders reminding them of the conditions under which hens should be kept and to advise that the practice of forced moulting (involving deprivation of food/water/light) is prohibited.

### EU Pig Welfare Workshop Report by DAFF

DAFF told CIWF to deal directly with them regarding this.

1. **EWS**

* DAFF have been continuing with the roll-out in a number of counties of this initiative to include the HSE and Local Development Companies. The objective is to generate a platform for joined-up thinking amongst different agencies with responsibility for animal and human welfare. The initiative has been enthusiastically received from all involved.
* Concern was expressed regarding the availability of sufficient amounts of fodder due to poor winter conditions and shortage of rain in the spring. DAFF said that there was not a full take-up of the Department’s fodder aid scheme, which was targeted at those who lost fodder due to the flooding. The IFA welcomed the fodder scheme but felt the restricted nature of the scheme limited numbers applying particularly with regard to those areas with fodder shortages which did not come within the remit of the scheme.
* The IFA were confident that rain and the resultant grass growth would improve the situation for farmers over the coming months.

1. **Equine Welfare**

* Horse welfare problems continue to be reported. Due to the ongoing problem it was agreed at a meeting of the Equine sub-committee that advice be updated to reflect the nature of the problems in the industry. This will be co-ordinated by HRI and ITBA.
* DAFF have been asked to examine the feasibility of transfer of ownership in the context of implementing Commission Regulation No. 504/2008 which sets out an improved system for the identification for equidae.
* DAFF said that there is a difficulty in coordinating the response to equine problems. Horses are not controlled within one industry or one department. Different solutions need to be found for different groups.
* Chairman recommended that Elizabeth O’Flynn join the Equine sub-group. This was accepted.

1. **Education Sub-Group**

* The Chairman said that the recent launch of the Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs was a very positive development.
* The sub-group will shortly commence work on drafting a Guideline Booklet on Laying Hens

1. **EuroFAWC** – *Sean O’Laoide*

* Mainly attended by Northern European Countries.
  + Commission and EFSA are very committed to Animal Welfare.
  + Commission want to establish Animal Welfare Reference Centres and they value EuroFAWC for this.
  + OIE is also moving towards Animal Welfare.
* Delegates had one session discussing non-farm animals.
  + There are differing priorities in each country. (e.g. cats in Belgium)
* The most important issue discussed was the welfare of the Dairy Cow.
  + There are issues with genetics. Cows can end up lame or with mastitis etc. It is a delicate balance.
  + Focus has moved from conditions to the actual animals to gauge welfare.
  + The European Commission has asked EFSA to produce a new opinion on the Dairy Cow. The Commission will have a new proposal. FAWAC will need to review our document on Dairy Cows.
  + It is important that Ireland take a proactive approach to this issue.
* FAWAC rates very well against similar European Institutions
* The EuroFAWC website is nearly ready.

1. **AOB**

* CIWF raised the issue of non-compliances by Irish transporters in a recent FVO report on the welfare of animals in transit in France and the identified non-compliance of Irish Transporters. DAFF representatives were not aware of any reported issues from France on such a matter and undertook to have the issue followed up by the relevant Division.
* DARDNI indicated that there is a bedding in period with this legislation and there may still be some operators operating with temporary permits. There is significant training taking place on this issue.
* CIWF expressed concern that there is nobody representing Animal Welfare in the 2020 strategy group on Agri-Food.
* DAFF clarified that the group was drawn together on a sectoral basis.
  + The IFA said that their President sits on this committee and has a lot of welfare experience.
  + Veterinary Ireland said that Vets are not represented either.
  + CIWF asked FAWAC to request representation on the 2020 Strategy Group.
* The Chairman raised the issue of animal welfare economic issues and considered it beneficial to have a representative from the Agri-Economic industry to talk to the Council on the subject.
  + The IFA said that farmers in selling their products experience constant price pressure from above and cost pressure from below. The deficit in food production in Europe is being met with imports from outside the EU, which in many cases do not meet the same strict welfare standards as EU produced food. IFA advise that a clear strategy needs to be developed vis-à-vis welfare vs economics.
  + DAFF said that Animal Welfare is a significant issue for the WTO.
  + CIWF said that even taking account of welfare issues, third countries are still cheaper (land, labour costs etc) and therefore the EU should compete on the basis of high animal welfare standards.
* Tom Doyle announced that he is retiring from his role on the Council. The Chairman thanked him for all his contributions.

## END