# Minutes of the Forty-Second Meeting of the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 24th February 2011

Present: Chairperson Professor P Fottrell, G O’Hagan (DAFF), B Carpenter (DAFF), S O’Laoide (Vet Ireland), L O’Flynn (Vet Ireland), N Griffin (ISPCA), M A Bartlett (CIWF), B Earley (TEAGASC), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), B Bent (WSPCA), M Murphy (IFA), TJ Flanagan (ICOS)

Apologies: C Connor (DARDNI), N Byers (ICMSA), A Hanlon (UCD), M Doran (IFA), S Foley (CILDEHS), R Doyle (ICOS)

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

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

Minutes of the meeting of 25th November 2010 were adopted with changes.

1. **Matters Arising**

* CIWF raised the issue of inviting Austrian Professor Dr Knut Niebuhr to talk to the Council on the issue of beak trimming. His study of the subject is due to be published. The Chairman asked CIWF if they could circulate a copy of this publication to Council members.
* CIWF asked if there had been a response from the Industry to the FAWAC Code of Practice for the Welfare of pigs. The Secretary agreed to write to the IFA seeking a formal response.
* DAFF gave an update on the progress regarding Laying Hens and expressed confidence that Ireland would be in a good position to satisfy the deadline of the 1st of January 2012.
* Vet Ireland reported that the mobile slaughter unit is working well in Sligo/Mayo. There are also three local plants dealing with cases of on-farm slaughter. The current limit of 48 months is being changed to 72 months. This will allow domestic plants to take all animals.
* CIWF raised the issue of Slaughter Without Stunning. The Chairman agreed that this would be discussed at the next council meeting.
* CIWF asked if the Minister has responded to the FAWAC Council’s recommendations on Fur Farming. DAFF agreed to report at the next meeting of the Council.
* **Programme for the Year 2011**
* Education
  + Vet Ireland suggested some topics to be considered by the Education Sub Group over the coming year:
    - Guide for the Euthanasia of Pigs.
    - A Code of Practice for Fairs and Marts
  + DAFF advised that it is examining the possibility of introducing an Animal Welfare Module into Secondary Schools, possibly in Transition Year. The Council expressed widespread enthusiasm on this. The IFA suggested that Agri Aware be consulted on this.
* Economic Impact of Animal Welfare
  + The Chairman expressed his wish that this be tackled over the course of the year. The IFA agreed to provide a list of possible names of people who could speak to the Council on this issue.

1. **Education Sub-Group**

* Sean O’Laoide said that the Code of Practice on the Welfare of Laying Hens is ready to go to tender for printing.

1. **EWS**

* Garry O’Hagan provided an update on EWS. The monitoring of High Risk Herds is working very well and there has been a reduction in the overall number of welfare cases. The HSE/Pobal initiative held a meeting in January. This is a welcome development.
* Vet Ireland suggested that it would be helpful to seek assistance of Local Authorities on the EWS initiative. Garry O’Hagan said that this is envisaged in the long-term.
* The Chairman suggested that FAWAC draft a paper on EWS detailing the work done and the positive developments to date.

1. **Equine Welfare**

* DAFF said that recent media reporting on horse welfare has been greatly distorted and exaggerated and reports of large numbers of allegedly abandoned horses in Ireland are simply not correct.
* DAFF are preparing a press briefing note on the matter.
* Most cases of abandoned horses are occurring in urban areas. These cases come within the Control of Horses Act 1996 which is enforced by Local Authorities. Local Authorities are being encouraged to heed the FAWAC advice on humane disposal of welfare compromised horses seized under this legislation.
* Local Authorities are making progress in dealing with the horse issue. Fingal County Council has initiated a horse project in the Dunsink area which provides for education on management and welfare of equines. In conjunction with owners, the industry and welfare bodies, all horses have been identified and microchipped.
* The Department is currently progressing a strategy with Local Authorities for a more uniform implementation of the Control of Horses Act.
* The number of foals registered in the Sport Horse industry has reduced significantly on previous years.
* The ISPCA echoed DAFF’s assertion that the number of thoroughbred horses found is very low.
* Veterinary Ireland raised the possibility of seeking a derogation to the Equine ID regulations on late registrations of horses. DAFF said that this would have to be pursued at a European level.
* Veterinary Ireland referred to the recent horse amnesty in Limerick City in which a small number of horses were surrendered.
* The ISPCA expressed concern about current unloading facilities for horses at Rosslare Harbour.
* Veterinary Ireland stressed the need for a Code of Practice for Fairs and Marts.

1. **AOB**

* The Government has recently approved the drafting of the Animal Health and Welfare Bill 2010. The Heads of the Bill have been submitted for drafting to the Office of Parliamentary Council.
* Regarding the Dog Breeding legislation, this comes within the remit of the Department of the Environment and is subject to a commencement order.
* The Welfare of Greyhounds Bill will be dependent on the approach of the new Government.
* The IFA queried whether FAWAC Guideline Booklets will be included in the Animal Health and Welfare Bill. Before these Guidelines were drafted, the IFA was assured that they would not be made part of legislation. The IFA would like confirmation of this before it agrees to sign off on future Guideline Booklets. The Chairman stated that these booklets are Recommendations of Best Practice and as such, are not legally binding.
* Teagasc gave an update on Welfare Related Research. (Annex 1)

**END**

# Annex 1

**An on-farm investigation of beef suckler herds using an animal welfare Index (AWI).**

Mazurek, M., Prendiville, D., Crowe, M.A., Veissier, I., Earley, B**\***. 2010. BMC Veterinary Research 2010, 6:55doi:10.1186/1746-6148-6-55.

\*corresponding author

**Is the avoidance distance test for the assessment of animals' responsiveness to humans influenced by either the dominant or flightiest animal in the group?**

Mazurek,M., McGee, M., Minchin, M., Crowe, MA., Prendiville, DJ, Earley, B**\***. 2011. Applied Animal Behaviour Science doi:10.1016/j.applanim.2011.03.001http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2011.03.001

\*corresponding author

**Consistency and stability of behavioural fear responses of heifers to different fear-eliciting situations involving humans.**

Mazurek, M., Prendiville, D., Crowe, M.A., Boivin, X, I., Earley, B**\***. 2011. Applied Animal Behaviour Science Applied Animal Behaviour Science 131, 2011, 21–28.

\*corresponding author

**New Research**

To lead and implement a research programme in the area of animal welfare assessment on-farm with particular emphasis on increasing our understanding of the well-being of food-producing bovine animals in production settings and to better equip the animal science and industry community with answers to consumers about the quality of life of our livestock.

The beef industry is of vital national importance to Ireland. Cattle accounted for 38% of Agriculture Output and generated foreign earnings of €1,619 million in 2009. Suckler beef production is a significant enterprise on over 90,000 farms and production is spread throughout Ireland. Similarly dairy calf-to-beef is an important system of beef production in Ireland. Teagasc plays a key role in developing competitive, profitable and sustainable systems of beef production.

These systems must maximise the use of grazed grass so as to capitalise on Ireland’s natural competitive advantage in grass production, and to contribute to the high quality, grass-fed reputation of Irish beef worldwide. The Dutch market is Ireland’s 3rd biggest market in Continental Europe for beef, with over 40,000 tonnes valued at 140 €million exported annually. Trade is focused mainly on the retail sector with Irish beef present in most of the main players, accounting for over 50% of retail sales. The welfare, health and management of farm animals are relevant concerns that need to be considered in order to increase consumer acceptance of animal production in the future. Bord Bia, together with Teagasc and beef exporters, have identified a need to extend the current Animal Welfare Index to include the full beef production cycle and to benchmark with other beef suppliers to the Dutch market. As this is seen as vital to developing the image of Irish beef, Bord Bia are funding this research project.