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

**Location:** Heritage Hotel, Portlaoise

Date: 22nd September 2011

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

Apologies: C Connor (DARDNI), N Byers (ICMSA), Kevin Kinsella (IFA), S Foley (CILDEHS). M Doran (IFA),

Secretary: Alan P O’Brien

# Minutes of the last FAWAC Meeting

Minutes of the meeting of 26th May 2011 were adopted with changes.

# Matters Arising

* The Secretary reported that the IFA and Teagasc had reported positive feedback from producers to the FAWAC Code of Practice for the Welfare of pigs. However, there has been no official response from the industry. CIWF requested that FAWAC ask the IFA if the industry is going to put into practice the recommendations in the Code of Practice with regard to tail docking.

# Presentation by Bernadette Earley (Teagasc) on Animal Welfare at Farm level

# Education Working Group

* The Code of Practice for the Production of Laying Hens was launched by Minister Coveney. The Minister met with FAWAC Chairman together with the Chairman of the Education Working Group Sean O’Laoide and expressed his continued support for the excellent work done by FAWAC.
* Two meetings of the Group have taken in relation to the Code of practice for sales dealing with equines. The Group would like some guidance from the FAWAC Council as to the proposed scope of the Booklet. The Council agreed that the booklets should cover Markets, Fairs and Marts.
* DAFF said that a draft Code of Practice has issued from the Department to Marts.
* ICOS said that while horse sales form a small part of the business of Marts, the Marts provide trace-ability and would be keen to stay involved.
* ISPCA expressed concern that the facilities at marts are designed for cattle and always compatible for horses.
* UCD said that handling horses is very different to handling cattle. ICOS added that it has a drover training programme for those involved in handling animals. It will look at adding a horse module.

# Early Warning System

* A meeting of the EWS North-West Regional Group was held on the 20th July. EWS continues to function well. No major issues were reported. Interaction with An Garda Siochana has been positive.
* The fodder situation looks positive.

# Equine Welfare

* DAFF has met with a number of Local Authorities with a view to finalising a memo of understanding on implementation of the Control of Horses Act.
* SI No 357 of 2011 European Communities Equine Regulations was signed into force by the Minister on the 5th of July. DAFF will be embarking on a publicity campaign in the near future as well as engaging with all sectors of the horse industry to address the current information deficit.
* The lack of awareness about passport requirements amongst a number of different sectors was highlighted. Vet Ireland suggested that passports should be highlighted as something that will have an economic benefit rather than a prohibitive cost. Particularly since a passport will save on knackery fees if a horse can enter the food chain.
* UCD suggested that Dr Des Leadon of the Irish Equine Centre could speak to FAWAC about his research into the demographic study of unwanted horses when completed.

# AOB

Pig Enrichment

* CIWF asked if there has been any positive progress in relation to enrichment materials. DAFF reported that producers are using a mix of nibbling beams, plastic footballs, rubber hoses and a number of other materials. However, there has been no associated decrease in tail biting.
* CIWF asked if DAFF has documented procedures to deal with cases of tail biting. DAFF agreed to report.

Pig Racing

* The ISPCA raised the issue of pig racing. This is being carried out at fundraising events. Transport to and participation at these events is likely to cause stress for the pigs and the events are unregulated. Pig farmers have complained about this. DAFF agreed to look into this issue.

Animal Health and Welfare Bill

* Drafting of the Bill continues and the Minister has indicated that he would like to publish the Bill before Christmas.

Lamb Ear Tags

* The ISPCA reported receiving some complaints from producers that ear tags for lambs are too big. ICOS said that this is mainly a visual impact issue and would only really give rise to expressions of concern when selling a baby lamb with its mother, which arises only in a small minority of cases.

Membership of Council

* DAFF said that the Minister is proposing to re-appoint members of the Council for a fixed period of three years. This is seen as a renewal of what has been a very successful group.
* The Chairman stressed the important work of the Council and that he would like to send a message that this has been a very successful group. The ISPCA echoed these sentiments highlighting the low number of welfare problems with farm animals.

SACAHW

* The SACAHW is also under review. The Chairman said that the SACAHW has played an important role in fulfilling its remit of providing independent expert advice to FAWAC.

Website

* The Secretary said that the new FAWAC Website is in its final stages. This should be online in a matter of weeks.

Ritual Slaughter

* The Secretary reported that the DAFF had asked Meat Industry Ireland for its views on approaching this issue the same way as New Zealand. The response was:

“The meat processing industry in Ireland does not consider a pan-industry approach to ritual slaughter, as practised in New Zealand, appropriate at this time. However, if market conditions change, the issue could be revisited in the future. Furthermore, such developments may need to be addressed from an EU perspective.”

* The Council agreed to ask the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare to review the science of this issue.
* CIWF sought clarification whether there are documented procedures in place to prevent religious slaughter for non-religious purposes and enquired about labelling in the context of meat from ritually slaughtered animals? DAFF clarified that the labelling issue is being dealt with by DG SANCO.

Sheep Handling

* CIWF referred to an article in the July 2011 Veterinary Ireland Journal raising issues with poor handling of sheep. Vet Ireland said that they have seen very little evidence of bruising in domestic abattoirs. DAFF agreed to speak to colleagues in the Departments Veterinary Public Health division on the matter.

Trade to Egypt

* CIWF asked for the status of trade with Egypt. DAFF said that while trade has technically re-opened, DAFF is not aware of any actual proposals to trade with Egypt.

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