# Minutes

# MEETING OF THE FARM ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COUNCIL (FAWAC)

**Date:** 18th June 2021

**Venue:** Via Webex

**Meeting Time:**  9.30am

**Attendee’s:**

Ciara Feeney-Reid (Chair), Brendan Golden IFA, Aine O’Connor IFA, Gerald Quain ICMSA, Bernadette Earley Teagasc, Ray Doyle ICOS, Stephen Arthur IFA, Patricia Reilly DAFM, Sean Murray DAFM, Aiden Maguire DAFM, Alison Hanlon UCD, Conor Dowling ISPCA, Conor Geraghty Veterinary Ireland. .

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting opened by suggesting that for future meetings the Council concentrate on one main agenda item at at each meeting. The Chair added that the intention for the September meeting is to focus on the topic of dairy calves.

1. **Minutes of the last meetings -- review of last years work and clarification of where things stand**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed among the group. A discussion then took place reviewing minutes and action points from meetings in 2020.

A discussion took place in relation to the FAWAC Calf Welfare Guidelines which were launched in November 2020. It was agreed that Sean Murray circulate electronically and post copies of the published document to members, Teagasc, UCD and ICMSA for circulation among members and students.

Among idea’s for the best way’s to circulate:

* FAWAC Website
* DAFM Facebook/Website
* Teagasc Facebook/Website

UCD highlighted the importance of educating young people on farming and welfare. Agri-aware sponsored by UCD want to further enhance the relationship between young people and the sector.. UCD added that there has been a lot of activity on dairy calf welfare in Ireland. DAFM has published peer-reviewed papers in the past number of months. UCD pointed to papers including 'Perspectives in Dealing with Surplus Male Farm Animals' in Frontiers in Veterinary Science. The DAFM-funded SWAB project has a paper in press on Irish dairy farmers' attitudes to dairy calf welfare based on survey data from 441 dairy farmers.

The topic of dairy/beef integration and attitudes arose with the IFA suggesting a future presentation on the topic suggesting Nicky Byrne, James Maher or Damien Barrett as possible presenters. James Maher had previously presented to the Council on dairy farmer attitudes.

The Chair asked for an update on equine welfare in Co. Kilkenny.

There are still big issue in Co. Kilkenny and also in Co. Cork that need addressing. ISPCA will revert with further information at the next meeting.

**2. Ratification of the terms of reference**

Attendees discussed terms of reference and it was agreed:

* Quorum to be min 50% plus 1
* Dates for core meetings agreed
* If unable to attend meetings members should arrange another member from your organisation to attend

**3. Suggestions for inclusion of other groups on the committee**

The Chair requested suggestions from members as to whether three would be benefit to inviting other organisations to join the Council. A discussion took place on potential members.

It was agreed among Council members that the FAWAC would invite relevant experts to meetings when discussing certain topics.

**4. EWS review and plan for reinvigoration**

The Chair advised of the intention to reinvigorate the Early Warning system and building a plan of action so the relevant bodies potential beneficiaries can have easy access to information on assistance available in the context on ‘One Health, One Welfare’ supports.

Veterinary Ireland informed the meeting that in their experience generally those involved in the EWS are aware of the EWS through emails and the Veterinary Journal adding that dealing with repeat offenders is a slow process and usually with an inevitable outcome. Veterinary Ireland offered to disseminate information via the Veterinary Journal.

Some suggestions put forward were in terms of targeting bodies for involvement were:

* Neighbours
* Knackeries
* GP
* Local Meetings
* Men’s Sheds
* HSE
* Discussion groups
* Farmers Organisations
* DVO/Vets
* Teagasc
* More information in local papers

It was recognised among the group that interventions are on a case by case basis and not one size fits all. It was further discuss that that is no malice towards the animals and that these issues can involve mental health, bereavement, financial problems amongst other things. The general sense was of the need to marry formal and informal to solve issues. Neighbours and the co-op’s together could solve many of these issues and communicate with all groups at local level.

The group agreed that a way forward is to get the networks back working and known to the public. This would facilitate communication with stakeholders, building relationships and knowledge.

DAFM stated that the Department should be a hub to support partnership and facilitate fixing issues at local level. DAFM agreed to contact regional DVO’s and nominate members for regional groups ahead of the next meeting.

DAFM reported that on a project that started with trying to identify key farm performance indicators to signal problems on farms (Patricia Kelly MVM thesis) was followed up by Catherine Devitt who interviewed farmers, PVPs and RVO/OVs about their experience and perspectives of farm animal neglect/animal welfare incidents. This culminated in the publication of a DAFM report. DAFM added that it would very beneficial to see the recommendations acted upon. DAFM agreed to circulate the report “Challenges and Solutions to Supporting Farm Animal Welfare in Ireland: Responding to the Human Element”.

Alison Hanlon informed the Council this would be her last meeting and Prof Siobhan Mullan will be representing UCD in the future. The Chair thanked Alison for her considerable contribution to the Council over the years and wished her well in her future endeavours.

**5. Topics for discussion at next meeting and action points**

* Nominees for 4 regional meetings in Sept/Oct – DAFM – Patricia Reilly
* Communicate with local groups for summer time meetings. IFA
* Consider renaming of EWS – All Members
* What name would the regional meetings come under
* Disseminate further information on the EWS though the Veterinary Journal - Vet Ireland
* Update on the Kilkenny equine – ISPCA
* Circulate hard copies of the Calf Welfare Guidelines to ICMSA, UCD, Teagasc – Sean Murray
* Circulate - “Challenges and Solutions to Supporting Farm Animal Welfare in Ireland: Responding to the Human Element”. – Sean Murray
* Update FAWAC website – DAFM – Sean Murray/Aiden Maguire
* Calf welfare to be topic for next meeting.

Next meeting September 17th.