

Advisory Council on Companion Animal Welfare

27 October, 2021

Minutes of Meeting

Attendees:

Seán O'Laoide – Chair
Martin Blake – Chief Veterinary Officer
Patricia Reilly – DAFM
Sean Murray – DAFM
Conor Dowling – ISPCA
Claire Owens – DSPCA
Sean Delmar – IKC
Carla Dunne – Dogs Trust
Una O'Toole – Irish Blue Cross
Maureen Byrne - Association of Dogs Trainers Ireland
Rory Breathnach – UCD
Siobhan Mullen – UCD

1. Introduction

The Chair welcomed the strong grouping present adding that the ACCAW stemmed from the ambitions of the Animal Welfare Strategy. Advised of the need work together as stakeholder group and added that the model for the Council has been successfully used in FAWAC. The Chair praised the output through consensus from the FAWAC and added the he hoped for the same from the ACCAW.

The CVO addressed the meeting and thanked all for participating and attending. The CVO added that there has been an evolution in thinking on animal welfare with momentum generating across the EU. The Department has developed a number of welfare initiatives and looked forward to the future success of the Council focused on companion animals. The Government is committed to animal welfare. The interdependency between human and animal health has been re emphasised with the Animal Welfare Strategy and the 'one health, one welfare' approach.

2. Introductions by members and issues identified for consideration

The Chair gave his background and experience in Europe and the EU Animal Welfare Platform which has worked very well and the Chair has been part of since 2017. Seán is also a past chair of EuroFAWAC. The Chair informed that he was a veterinary practitioner by profession with 10 years private sector experience and 30 years in the Local Authority. The Chair added that he had been a FAWAC member since it's inception in 2003.

Particia Reilly introduced herself Head of Division of Animal Welfare Division in DAFM and advised of challenges and focus on animal welfare in the companion animal sector.

ISPCA - Conor Dowling

Chief Inspector with the ISPCA. 23 years in the ISPCA. Issues for the ISPCA to consider: Trade in dogs and puppies and the escalation of demand. ISPCA feel the penalties and possibilities of being caught need to be addressed. Needs a joined up approach with the welfare and disease elements need, maybe a multi agency approach involving Gardai to combat illegal trade. Need to change standards and enforcement as society changes attitudes and behaviours. Seizure aspects of enforcement needs to be addressed. ISPCA are being penalized in terms of boarding fees.

DSPCA - Claire Owens

Equine Welfare and Rehoming Manager. Delighted to be part of the group. Aspects of the Animal Health and Welfare Act, 2013. Costs incurred when animal are seized when a case is pending. Puppy trade, proof of ownership when puppies seized. Improvement notices are working well. Number of welfare calls has reduced in recent years. Education and outreach initiatives are working well.

IKC – Sean Delmar

President of IKC – Deal with pedigree and pure bred dogs. Have a Code of Ethics for Breeders which is restrictive. Enables life ban's from registering with the IKC. Feel there is not enough power for penalizing breeders and illegal trade. IKC is committed to welfare of all dogs whether registered with the IKC or not. Look forward to assisting the Council with advice on practices and breeding. Will act as a liaison with the EU Commission and the Council.

Dogs Trust – Carla Dunne

Group Head of Operations, Veterinary and Behaviour. Dogs Trust are delighted to have these stakeholders in the room. Dogs Trust have recently expanded rehoming across the country. Very much focused on welfare and education dog owners and dog lovers on welfare and acquisition. Look forward to working together for a joined up approach to legislation, prevention and enforcement.

Irish Blue Cross – Una O'Toole

Head of Veterinary Services. Focus on owners who can't afford private veterinary care. Assisting with acquisitions. Education programs on acquisition and care will be of great benefit. Important issue – responsible dog ownership.

Association of Dogs Trainers Ireland – Maureen Byrne

The Association has 46 members nationwide and is an umbrella group for dog trainers. Provide certified dog training. Provide speakers and webinars and dog trainers. COVID fallout and mass production has been an issue. Behavioural problems are a big issue and can often lead to euthanasia. Maureen is the sole dog behaviouralist in Ireland.

UCD - Rory Breathnach – Intention is to listen to members and add value where possible. Will take messages on societal needs to undergraduate training.

Siobhan Mullen – UCD Chair of Veterinary Ethics

Background as a veterinary surgeon. Focus is on research, welfare and quality of life assessments to drive improvements. Have looked at the value of formalized assessments in vet practices and shelters. Have worked with communities on equine welfare.

Claire Meade - Cat Hospital – Working in veterinary practice dealing with cats. Involved with ISFM and have access to international perspectives through that grouping. Can bring this knowledge and expertise to the Council in relation to cats.

3. Terms of Reference –

Circulated to members in advance. The Chair explained the role of the Council in relation to the terms of reference. Suggested that the Terms of Reference be finalized at the next meeting.

Issue for next meeting:

The Chair advised the meeting that there is a distinction in Denmark and Norway the Animal Welfare Councils are moving towards Ethics Councils

Action: Siobhan Mullen present at the next meeting on the overlap of ethics and welfare. On agenda for the next meeting.

DAFM– The initiatives of the Strategy, exotic animals DAFM to lead an interdepartmental group, advice and a steer from a welfare perspectives. Increase in trade of puppies, issues involved.

Action: DAFM to circulate document on the PFG commitments in advance of the next meeting. Pet ownership issue is also important.

Action: Chair - Animal Welfare Platform Documentation – Responsible dog ownership, trade will circulate documentation.

ISPCA - Feral cats still a major issue for ISPCA, would like to see more support and investment. Exotic animals an issue. Equine welfare an issue.

4. Next meeting

Chair thanked all will arrange a face to face in the Spring.