

Animal Welfare in DAFM

1. [Legislative Framework](#)

The Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 provides a regulatory framework for welfare of animals in general. Farmed animals, and particularly regulation of intensive animal rearing systems are regulated under SI 311 of 2010, European Communities (Welfare of farmed animals) Regulations

Developments related to animal welfare

Animals are entitled to the five freedoms. The legislative framework for animal welfare seeks to ensure that animals are kept in such a way that their welfare is provided for. For example, animals are entitled to good feeding and not just avoidance of starvation. As understanding of the welfare needs of animals we keep expands, the legislative framework accommodates appropriate strategies to ensure enhanced provision for the welfare of animals is achieved.

Authorised officers have significantly increased powers. With increased power comes increased responsibility and officers receive more training in the science of welfare regulation. Such training is carried out locally, nationally and at European level through the EU Commission. Welfare regulation is a swiftly evolving and DAFM seeks to ensure that its officers achieve effective approaches to animal welfare.

Welfare regulation is further enhanced through improved means of communicating with persons keeping animals and application of appropriate amelioration of welfare issues where animals are being kept with welfare deficits. The regulations also provide for, where appropriate, sanctions or penalties which are effective proportionate and dissuasive. Where necessary significant financial penalties can be applied, and in certain circumstances a prohibition on owning or working with animals can be applied

2. [New Animal Welfare Division and Animal Welfare Strategy](#)

Welfare policy will to be further enhanced by a new National Animal Welfare Strategy which is soon to be launched. In October 2020, DAFM established a dedicated Animal Welfare Division which will

take the policy lead on all matters concerning animal welfare, coordinating efforts across the Department, working with other Departments and Agencies, and with stakeholders and civil society. The Division will be responsible for the roll-out and delivery of Ireland's first stand-alone Animal Welfare Strategy - Working Together for Animal Welfare. The strategy will cover farmed and companion animals as well as wildlife, and will soon be launched by the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

This strategy takes a 'One Health, One Welfare' approach, acknowledging and valuing the interconnections and interdependences between human, animal and environmental health, and taking an evidence-led approach to policy making, target-setting, monitoring and evaluation.

Whilst the strategy is primarily an enabling strategy, it also sets out specific actions in response to the 2020 Programme for Government, connections with the new CAP cycle and welfare commitments in the European Green Deal and Farm to Fork Strategy. Working Together for Animal Welfare, is an ambitious, realistic strategy that makes a series of clear, time-bound, evidence-based commitments to improving animal welfare in Ireland.

3. The Wider Welfare Approach

FAWAC and the Early Warning System (EWS)

The Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council (FAWAC) in existence since 2002, has been instrumental in promoting animal welfare in a practical way and providing a forum for different interest groups to meet, exchange views and reach consensus on the various challenges relating to animal welfare on farms. A number of guidelines have been produced on an agreed basis to outline best practice for anyone seeking to keep farm animals. A list of FAWAC guidelines produced to date is included at Table 1.

The Early Warning/Intervention System (EWS) is an initiative, which was introduced in 2004 by FAWAC involving the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Marine, the Irish Farmers' Association and the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The objective of this system is to provide a framework within which farm animal welfare problems can be identified before they become critical or overwhelming. Efforts continue to be made to extend the involvement of other agencies that may have a role to play. These include An Garda Síochána, the

Health Service Executive, the Local Authority Veterinary Service and the Private Veterinary Practitioners.

Table 1: FAWAC Welfare Publications
Calf Welfare Guidelines (pdf 59,451Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Dairy Herds (pdf 10,255Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Emergency Killing of Pigs on Farm (pdf 485Kb)
Practical EU Animal Transport Guides for cattle, sheep, horses, pigs and poultry (doc 2,271Kb)
Code of Practice for the Welfare of Laying Hens (pdf 783Kb)
Code of Practice for the Welfare of Pigs (pdf 1,096Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Managing Acutely Injured Livestock on Farm (pdf 844Kb)
Appendix Forms (doc 27Kb)
Revised Animal Welfare Guidelines for Beef Farmers 2008 (pdf 3,671Kb)
Code of Practice for the Welfare of Broiler Chickens 2008 (pdf 1,845Kb)
Best Practice for the welfare of Animals During Transport (pdf 1,885Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses, Ponies and Donkeys (pdf 334Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Beef Farmers 2003 (pdf 431Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Sheep Farmers 2003 (pdf 336Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Beef, Sheep and Dairy Farmers 2003 (pdf 137Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Dairy Farmers 2003 (pdf 483Kb)
Animal Welfare Guidelines for Horses at Gatherings and Sales (pdf 4,448Kb)

[Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare \(SACAHW\)](#)

The Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health and Welfare (SACAHW) was re-constituted in 2013 under the Chairmanship of Dr Colm Gaynor (former Chief Veterinary Officer and Head of the FVO). Its terms of reference are as follows:-

On the basis of the best available scientific knowledge and practice:

- To consider and advise on ways in which Ireland's animal health and welfare can be protected and enhanced;

- To provide the Minister with such advice on particular matters relating to animal health and welfare as may be requested from time to time;

To date the SACAHW have made a series of Recommendations regarding certain husbandry procedures for farmed animals including the following:

- SACAHW Opinion on Restraint at Non Stun Slaughter
- The Use of Electro-Immobilisation on Live Farm Animals in Ireland - A report by the Scientific Advisory Committee on Animal Health & Welfare - March 2005 This practice was banned in 2006.
- The Opinion of the SACAHW on the need to provide for necessary husbandry practices on (i) castration of cattle and sheep, ii) dehorning/disbudding of cattle, and iii) tail docking of sheep
- SACAHW Opinion on Electro Ejaculation
- SACAHW Opinion on Painful Procedures
- Response to Committee on Animal Health & Welfare on Animal Cloning and Its Potential Impact on Animal Health & Welfare
- Welfare Aspects of the Slaughter of Fur Producing Animals in Ireland Final Report
- Report on the Availability of Veterinary Medicines in Ireland - January 2005

The World Organisation of Animal Health (OIE)

Ireland along with other EU member states works closely with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). The OIE Region for Europe – comprising 53 member countries - has developed an Animal Welfare Platform to advance animal welfare matters in the Europe region and the neighbouring OIE regions of the Middle East and Africa. Among the current work programme is welfare at slaughter, welfare during long journeys by road and ‘whole of journey’ scenarios (WEJS) which deal with cross international boundaries of animal transport. This WJS is to move to deal with the transport by animals by sea. The Irish CVO is a member of the Steering Group of this Platform.

OIE Funding

DAFM has committed €75k per annum over the period 2017-2020 in support of OIE capacity building activities relating to the welfare of animals at the time of slaughter in Third countries (and towards the concept of whole journey scenarios) in the context of long distance animal transport.

Co-ordination with the EU Commission and other EU Member states

DAFM is the Competent Authority responsible for the implementation of the EU legislation on animal welfare (namely the animal welfare Directives). In order to do this effectively DAFM has a continuing high-level interaction with the EU Commission and other member states on animal welfare matters.

For instance DAFM attends the ScoPAFF Committee. This group provides both policy and operational interventions for the EU Commission on a variety of topics including animal welfare.

DAFM participates in the EU Animal Welfare Platform. As well as having representatives from the EU Commission and member states the platform includes representatives from international organisations and NGOs. Attendance at the platform ensures DAFM can provide a consistent message in collaborative meetings with its members.

DAFM also attends meetings and sessions of the Animal Welfare Platforms for both poultry and pigs. These are critical fora that provide professional dialogue on the science and strategies for effective welfare regulation in the critical areas of intensive farming.

Regular training for authorised officers on animal welfare is achieved at European level through attendance at BTSF (Better training for Safer Food) courses.

Up to recently DAFM provided a National Expert on animal welfare. It is envisaged to further participate with the EU Commission at this level.

4. Animal Welfare Controls and Activities

A summary of welfare measures undertaken by DAFM are outlined below

Welfare Area	Outputs
Transport of Livestock	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ DAFM Officials inspect over 90% (200,000 animals approx.) of all livestock exported annually at ports of departure.➤ All vehicles transporting animals off the island (Type 2 transporters) are subject to inspection and authorisation by DAFM – authorisation is valid for up to 5 years.➤ Rigorous inspections of livestock vehicles are carried out by veterinary officials when present at time of loading.

- Further inspections are undertaken on vehicles at marts and those delivering animals to slaughter plants.
- All consignments of livestock departing through Rosslare Port are subject to routine welfare documentary checks prior to embarking on ferry. In addition, certain consignments are selected for veterinary inspections, both on quayside and after loading on-board the ship.
- Horses departing through Dublin Port which require veterinary certification are also subject to routine oversight checks.
- From January 1st 2019 the GPS records of all journeys will be required to be submitted for review 7 days after the end of the journey.
- Animal welfare checks include the requirement for unweaned calves to stop and rest for a 13 hour period upon arrival in France – we have had close cooperation with the French authorities to ensure that this takes place. DAFM have worked closely with the French authorities in the construction of high quality control post facilities for calves increasing capacity from 800 animals to 4000. There is continuous collaboration with the French authorities in relation to real time data exchange, journey log monitoring and infringement notifications.
- Sanctions issued for non-compliances and infringements include the suspension of vehicle authorisation to transport animals. Fixed penalty payments and possible prosecution under the AHW Act.

Welfare Inspections

DAFM prioritises the welfare of animals and ensuring that animals are experiencing lives worth living is a significant ongoing undertaking.

DAFM currently has in excess of 100 authorised veterinary inspectors located in 16 Regional Veterinary Offices (RVOs) distributed across the country

ISPCA inspectors and Gardaí have also been authorised specifically under the Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013.

As the Competent Authority, DAFM is required to carry out inspections of farmed animals on a regular basis. These are carried out by the RVO veterinary inspectors. Since there are many more farms (e.g. about 33,000 sheep farms) than resources, farms are selected for inspection based on an annual risk analysis. Inspections are carried out in a consistent manner using preformulated inspection forms and checklists.

	<p>The inspectors have the responsibility of ensuring that where animals are being reared in a non-compliant fashion, that these welfare deficits are effectively eliminated.</p> <p>In addition to routine welfare inspections, a substantial number of additional welfare inspections carried out on the basis of reports received at RVO's.</p> <p>These reports are many and varied and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports received through the Animal Welfare Complaints system from members of the public • Reports received in the Regional Veterinary Office. These originate from the public, reports from other Divisions of DAFM and particularly from targeted notifications systems based on animal welfare indicators especially on foot of slaughterhouse observations. <p>All of these sources of welfare concerns are investigated by a veterinary inspector to determine the presence or otherwise of welfare deficits for animals.</p> <p>Welfare appraisal is therefore risk based so that resources are focused where there is a greater likelihood of animals sustaining allocation of resources to ensure appropriate levels of welfare.</p>
<p><i>Ex Gratia Funding</i></p>	<p>€3.2m was awarded to 101 animal welfare organisations in 2020</p> <p>Including €485, 000 to both the DSPCA and the ISPCA part of which assists in their work as authorised officers under the AHW Act.</p>
<p><i>On Farm Initiatives</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dairy Herd Inspections: DAFM initiated inspections on expanding Dairy farms in 2016. This is the first series of such inspections in the EU ➤ A new approach to risk identification has been developed using DAFM's AIM database (births and movements) to identify dairy herds which demonstrate elevated data associated with welfare risk. ➤ Dairy Herds identified in this way can be further assessed using AIM data to see if inspection is merited ➤ Animal Based measures: DAFM has initiated a new set of welfare inspections that focus on using animal based measures to assess the welfare of the animals. This means that the actual experience of the animals is being assessed as well

	<p>the place where animals are kept and the person responsible for their care.</p> <p>DAFM is embarking on the AM/PM system: This major initiative will seek recording and reporting of observations of animals in slaughtering plants just prior to and after slaughter, for instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Foot Pad Dermatitis (FPD): Damage to the feet of broiler chickens due to FPD is a potent indicator that the farm the chickens came from has significant welfare issues. ➤ Pig Tails: Pig farms where routine docking of pig tails occurs are poorer welfare farms. Pigs bite one another's tails if they are living in conditions which are unsuited for their welfare needs. ➤ Lameness: It will soon be possible to determine farms of various species where chronic lesions (unattended to) are recorded for slaughtered animals. Unattended-to lameness represents ongoing pain for a number of species ➤ Cross Divisional Welfare reports: Sometimes animals arrive for slaughter where it was inappropriate to transport or slaughter them.
<p>DAFM Participation in national welfare initiatives</p>	<p>DAFM actively participates in and contributes to external welfare initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021 (NTRIS) ➤ The Irish Pet Advertising Advisory Group (IPAAG) ➤ The County and City Management Association (CCMA) ➤ Dublin Region Horse Welfare Steering Group ➤ Regional Urban/Traveller Horse Groups ➤ North/South Transport Discussion Group
<p>AHW Act include NGO'S and Gardaí and Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DAFM has authorised specific officers in the ISPCA, DSPCA and the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board as authorised officers under the Animal Health and Welfare Act with powers relating to animal welfare in specific circumstances.
<p>Urban Horse Projects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DAFM provides funding to local authorities to support urban/traveller horse projects in their respective areas. These initiatives will help horse owners

	<p>with compliance with equine related legislation including identification, premises registration and control of horses and in assisting young urban/travellers in acquiring the necessary skills in relation to caring and managing horses alongside a broader education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To date total funding has been drawn down amounting to over €1.37m under this scheme.
<p><i>Training and Development Completed</i></p>	<p>Animal Welfare training undertaken by DAFM Staff and related stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Animal Handling Courses for DAFM veterinary inspectors and other authorised officers provided by international specialist Miriam Parker ➤ Animal Health and Welfare Act legislative training for Regional Offices and Welfare Organisations ➤ Inspector Training in Broiler Welfare ➤ Slaughter Plant Training for operatives ➤ Better Training Safer Food (BFST) Formal Training for DAFM Staff on welfare at slaughter, Pig Welfare, Boiler welfare, Risk Assessment for welfare, and Laying hen welfare are important for veterinary inspectors to keep up to date with regulatory science and from a European perspective. ➤ Veterinary Inspector training under the Intact Tails Programme ➤ Training for private Veterinary practitioners in performing Risk Assessment for tail biting on pig farms and creating Welfare Action Plans for those farms ➤ Training inspectors in assessment of new non- intensive pig farms (pre-registration inspections). ➤ Knowledge Transfer Training: A suite of Knowledge Transfer measures is included in the new Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, with funding of €100m and includes support for Knowledge Transfer Groups across the Beef, Sheep, Dairy, Poultry, and Equine Sectors. . Almost 20,000 farmers in 1200 Knowledge Transfer Groups have attended meetings and approved Knowledge Transfer events which, together with a tailored Farm Improvement Plan, will support farmers in addressing a range of competitiveness and sustainability challenges including animal health facing the sector.

<p>DAFM Animal Welfare Helpline</p>	<p>Over 850 calls in 2020. Each call investigated by Veterinary Inspectors of DAFM from the Regional Veterinary Offices.</p>
<p>Prosecutions under AHW Act</p>	<p>Over 100 successful prosecutions to date under the AHW Act 2013 and a further 32 are currently before the courts</p>
<p>Research Studies commissioned and supported by DAFM in welfare matters</p>	<p>Several research studies report some of which are commissioned and supported by DAFM focusing on farm/animal welfare include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Challenges and Solutions to Supporting Farm Animal Welfare in Ireland</i> Catherine Devitt, Alison Hanlon Simon More, Patricia Kelly, Martin Blake ➤ <i>One Welfare: A Framework to Improve Animal Welfare and Human Wellbeing</i> 1st Edition by Rebeca García Pinillos (Editor), ➤ <i>Identification of key performance indicators for on-farm animal welfare incidents: possible tools for early warning and prevention</i> Patricia C Kelly^{1*}, Simon J More², Martin Blake¹ and Alison J Hanlon ➤ <i>Dilemmas experienced by government veterinarians when responding professionally to farm animal welfare incidents in Ireland</i> C. Devitt, 1 P. Kelly,² M. Blake,² A. Hanlon,³ S. J. More ➤ <i>Conducting sensitive social science research about on-farm animal welfare incidents: challenges and approaches</i> C Devitt^{*†}, P Kelly[‡], M Blake[‡], A Hanlon[§] and SJ More[#]
<p>DAFM Funded Research Welfare Projects under the Research Stimulus Fund (RSF)</p>	<p>DAFM’s Competitive Research Programme has provided funding to several ongoing or completed projects that include in their scope of work adopting technology based tools in order to address animal welfare based challenges.</p> <p>These include projects in the areas of respiratory diseases of pigs, the reduction of tail biting in pigs and bacterial diseases of dairy cows.</p> <p>Summary of projects to date related to animal welfare:</p> <p>Project Title:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strategies to PROtect and improve the WELfare of dairy COWs in Irish systems of milk production – ProWelCow ➤ SWAB: Surveillance Welfare and Biosecurity of farmed animals. ➤ Antimicrobial Use and Resistance in Animal Production ➤ Environmental enrichment and nutritional strategies to reduce tail biting in pig farms ➤ Investigation of respiratory disease on Irish pig farms, associated risk factors & the relationship with performance, welfare & antimicrobial use ➤ Development of ante and post mortem abattoir inspection of pigs as a welfare surveillance tool ➤ Evaluation of the Beef Suckler Welfare Scheme: and Mechanisms affecting farmer behaviour/ attitudes ➤ Investigating the human aspects of on-farm animal welfare incidents
<p><i>Codes of Practice</i></p>	<p>DAFM in consultation with stakeholders and via public consultation have produced codes of practice in the following area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Fur Farming ➤ Hunting
<p><i>Control of Horses</i></p>	<p>DAFM fund the seizure, rehoming or disposal of horses by Local Authorities under the Control of Horse Act.</p> <p>The number of horses seized nationally dropped from 4,727 in 2013 to 885 in 2019 Expenditure dropped from € 3,025,599 in 2013 to €184,109 in 2019.</p>
<p><i>Sheep Welfare Scheme</i></p>	<p>Under this scheme, sheep farmers with breeding ewes can apply for payment based on 2 actions they choose to undertake from a menu of options appropriate to their flock type (i.e. hill or lowland) in order to improve animal welfare. The scheme began in December 2016. Total expenditure on the scheme in 2020 to the end of October amounted to €16.96 million paid to 18,621 participants</p>