

## Agriculture & Rural Development Committee ARD 10-02(min)

### Minutes

**Date:** Wednesday 19 June  
**Time:** 2.00pm to 5.30pm  
**Venue:** Committee Room 3, National Assembly Building

In attendance

#### *Members*

|                                     |                             |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Glyn Davies, <i>Chair</i>           | Mid and West Wales          |
| Mick Bates                          | Montgomery                  |
| Ron Davies                          | Caerphilly                  |
| Jocelyn Davies                      | South Wales East            |
| Cynog Dafis                         | Mid and West Wales          |
| Delyth Evans <i>Deputy Minister</i> | Mid and West Wales          |
| John Griffiths                      | Newport East                |
| Peter Rogers                        | North Wales                 |
| Rhodri Glyn Thomas                  | Carmarthen East and Dinefwr |

#### *Officials*

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Colin Williams (2 & 3) | Animal Health Division                  |
| Tony Edwards (2)       | Chief Veterinary Officer Wales          |
| Rosemary Thomas (2)    | Agriculture & Fisheries Policy Division |
| Huw Davies (3)         | Office of the Counsel General           |
| Alyn Williams (7)      | Food & Farming Development Division     |
| Arwyn Davies (7)       | WDA Food Directorate                    |
| Simon Hewitt (7)       | Forestry Commission                     |
| Jon Westlake (7)       | Forestry Commission                     |
| Claire Whyley (4)      |   |
| Mark Jeffs (4)         | Welsh Consumer Council                  |
| Dr Bernard Tinker (5)  | Welsh Consumer Council                  |
| <i>Secretariat</i>     |   |
| Adrian Crompton        | Committee Clerk                         |

## **Item 1: Introduction, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest**

1.1 Apologies had been received from Mike German for whom Mick Bates substituted.

1.2 The following declarations of interest were made:

- The Chair declared that he and his wife were partners in a farming business.
- Peter Rogers declared that he, his wife and son were partners in a farming business and that he was a member of the Countryside Alliance.
- Both referred to fuller details available in the Register of Members' Interests.
- Mick Bates declared that he was a partner in a farming business.
- Ron Davies declared that he was a member of the League Against Cruel Sports.

1.3 The Chair confirmed that the Committee's meeting on 17 July would be held at the International Pavilion on the Royal Welsh Showground in Builth Wells, starting at 2.30pm.

1.4 In accordance with Standing Order 15.3 the Committee agreed to European and External Affairs Committee's request to consider European fishing quotas.

1.5 Subject to clarification of the portfolio of the Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad, and consequent implications for the Committee's remit, Members requested that future Minister's Reports should cover the whole range of these responsibilities.

Subject to clarification of the portfolio of the Minister for Rural Development and Wales Abroad, and consequent implications for the Committee's remit, future Minister's Reports to cover the whole range of these responsibilities – **Minister and relevant officials**

## **Item 2: Minister's report: ARD 10-02 (p1)**

### ***TB in Wildlife***

2.1 In discussion the following points were made:

- measures included in the interim strategy on bovine TB – the greater use of the gamma interferon test, the wider application of the severe interpretation of test results and the additional resources allocated to testing – should enable more farms to be tested sooner. The time taken for results from

individual farms to be received would not, however, be affected.

- a risk assessment was being conducted into the possibility of permitting animal movements between farms of equivalent TB status;
- consideration was being given to increasing available laboratory testing capacity;
- an announcement was anticipated soon on the use of collection centres to ease the burden of TB restrictions;
- clarification would be provided to Committee Members on the inclusion of road killed badgers in research into the risk of infection in other wildlife.

### ***Statutory registration of tourist accommodation***

2.2 Members noted that the Economic Development Committee was soon to receive a presentation from the Wales Tourist Board when this matter would be discussed.

### ***20 movement standstill***

2.3 Concern was expressed about the impact of the livestock movement standstill on farmers and the degree to which it could be effective in preventing further outbreaks of animal disease. Members noted that the maintenance of adequate bio-security was continually assessed by DEFRA and the Agriculture & Rural Affairs Department and would be addressed by the recommendations of the Anderson and Follett inquiries into the foot and mouth outbreak.

2.4 Clarification would be provided on the rules governing livestock collection centres and auctions on the same site and day.

Clarification to be provided to Committee Members on inclusion of road killed badgers in Oxford University research into the risk of cattle form M bovis infection in wildlife species other than badgers - **Minister, Chief Veterinary Officer**

Clarification would be provided on the rules governing livestock collection centres and auctions on the same site and day - **Minister, Chief Veterinary Officer**

### **Item 3: Subordinate legislation: ARD 10-02(p3)**

3.1 The Committee considered the following recommended amendments to the Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2002:

To bring forward the date after which rearing hens in conventional cage systems is prohibited:

- *Amendment 1 - In Schedule 3B, paragraph 4, to replace '2012' with '2006'*

To bring forward the date after which all cage systems must comply with the Regulations in Schedule 3C relating to enhanced cage systems:

- *Amendment 2 - In Schedule 3C, paragraph 1, to replace '2012' with '2006'.*

To bring forward the date after which beak trimming is prohibited:

- *Amendment 3 - In schedule 3D, paragraph 9, to replace '2010' with 2004'.*

To bring forward the date by which all newly built or non-cage systems must comply with the Regulations in Schedule 3A.

- *Amendment 4 - In schedule 3A, paragraph 2, to replace '2007' with 2006'.*

To bring forward the date until which a stocking density higher than the 9 per metre<sup>2</sup> required by the Regulation is permitted for some establishments

- *Amendment 5 - In schedule 3A, paragraph 7, to replace '2011' with 2005'.*

3.2 Each recommended amendment was agreed to by 5 votes to 4 with Members voting as follows:

*For* – Jocelyn Davies, Cynog Dafis, Rhodri Glyn Thomas, John Griffiths, Ron Davies.

*Against* – Glyn Davies, Peter Rogers, Mick Bates, Delyth Evans.

Minister to consider recommended amendments to Welfare of Farmed Animals (Wales) Amendment Regulations 2002 - **Minister, Animal Health Division**

#### **Item 4: Committee's policy review of organic farming: ARD 10-02(p3)**

4.1 The following issues were raised in discussion with the Welsh Consumer Council:

- consumers in rural areas often found that organic produce was unavailable in the limited number of retail outlets accessible to them. The Committee's report should consider how to develop such local markets and continuity of supply from small-scale organic producers;
- the Welsh Consumer Council undertook to provide the Committee with information on the retail price premium available on different organic products;
- the Welsh Consumer Council felt there was potential to market organic food by providing consumers with information about the environmental benefits offered by organic

production.

Welsh Consumer Council to provide the Committee with information on the retail price premium available on different organic products, **Secretariat, WCC**

#### **Item 5: Committee's policy review of organic farming: ARD 10-02(p4)**

5.1 The following issues were raised in discussion with Dr Bernard Tinker:

- the book edited by Dr Tinker – *Shades of Green* – indicated that current evidence was insufficient to support the assertion that organic food was significantly different to conventional produced food in terms of its health and nutritional value. Dr Tinker agreed that this absence of evidence did not necessarily mean that such differences did not exist, but said that the burden of scientific proof lay with those making the claim;
- although animal manure was produced in all livestock systems, its use as a fertilizer was greater in organic production with consequent risks of microbial contamination;
- Dr Tinker felt that there was potential for UK-produced organic food to increase its share of the retail market through marketing collaboration by producers.

#### **Item 6: Hunting with dogs: ARD 10-02(p5)**

6.1 After considerable discussion of the arguments surrounding a ban on hunting with dogs, the Committee considered the following motion:

*that the Committee endorses the report subject to amendments of fact being incorporated into the final draft and agreed by all Members out of Committee*

6.2 The motion was agreed to by 4 votes to 3 with Members voting as follows:

- For – Ron Davies, Jocelyn Davies, John Griffiths, Delyth Evans.
- Against – Cynog Dafis, Peter Rogers, Mick Bates.
- Abstentions – Glyn Davies
- Rhodri Glyn Thomas was not present for the vote.

Final report to be sent to Alun Michael, DEFRA Minister for Rural Affairs - **Secretariat**

#### **Item 7: Alternative Sector Action Plans: ARD 10-02(p6)**

7.1 Committee Members welcomed the work done to date on each of the action plans. In discussion, officials undertook to provide the Committee with details of the scope for diverting existing livestock payments to the support of biomass projects. The potential for willow and short rotation coppicing in Wales was limited by the topography and land quality. The

implementation of the woodland and biomass strategy would follow the model adopted by the Woodland Forum with a steering group and appropriate working parties.

Details to be provided to the Committee of the scope for diverting existing livestock payments to the support of biomass projects – **Minister, Food & Farming Development Division, Forestry Commission**

**Item 8: Deliberate release of GMOs into the environment: ARD 10-02(p7)**

8.1 Pressure of time prevented the Committee from considering the paper. Members agreed that the public consultation on the draft regulations should begin as soon as possible but wished it recorded that they had not yet considered the content of the regulations.

Consideration of regulations relating to the deliberate release of GMOs into the environment to be included on agenda early in the autumn term - **Secretariat, Minister, Countryside Division**

**Item 9: Minutes of the previous meeting: ARD 09-02(min)**

9.1 The Committee approved the minutes of the 29 May meeting.

**Committee Secretariat - June 2002**