

# Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

23/01 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Monday 6 February 2023 at 10.00 am.

Present:



NACWO = Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer

NVS = Named Veterinary Surgeon

Apologies were received from [redacted] and [redacted]

The AWERB welcomed [redacted] to the meeting.

23/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 29 September 2022 were approved as a correct record.

23/03 Matters Arising

*22/22 Input around animal free innovations*

It was noted that a section on animal free innovations and the replacement element had been included in the 3Rs strategy (see 23/04).

### *22/23 Mid-Term Review and animal lived experience*

In regard to commercial lettings the AWERB noted that, other than [REDACTED], there were currently no other commercial lettings on University property that would require inclusion on the Establishment Licence.

The AWERB noted that it would be important to keep a watching brief on relevant legislation on this matter. It was expected that any further legal entities who might lease University property and undertake animal work would be required to apply for their own licence; this would be picked up as part of wider due diligence for any letting.

### *22/22 and 22/27 Future topics*

It was noted that no progress had been made on the action related to compassion fatigue and other mental health challenges yet. In respect of the action on improvements on web pages this was postponed to the next meeting and a fuller discussion on the communications strategy.

### *22/24 Technical Services*

It was noted that a wheelchair was now available in the BRU.

## 23/04 Good Practice and Regulatory Requirements – progress update

In response to the ongoing review of the University's compliance in relation to Standard Conditions in the University's ASPA Establishment Licence the AWERB noted the following actions:

### **PEL Audit Information**

The AWERB received an analysis of the all the Standard Conditions – current processes, where evidence could be found, and where there were gaps.

The next step would be a small group to meet to discuss how to plug the gaps, how to prepare for a future audit, and to develop a workplan.

It was suggested that being able to demonstrate a track record would be important in demonstrating efficacy – an annual review of the AWERB's own performance would be helpful in this regard. The recent facilities audits (Farm and BRU) that had taken place were also important in terms of practical lessons learnt.

It was agreed that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would meet again to discuss next steps.

**Action:** [REDACTED]

### **3Rs Strategy**

The AWERB received a draft 3Rs strategy. It was noted that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had used the NC3R's self-assessment tool in developing the document along with an example from another institution. The strategy would need to address any deficiencies.

It was agreed that the output from the NC3R's tool should be circulated for information.

**Action:** [REDACTED]

The following comments were made:

- The document was quite internally focussed. There was value in looking externally at other examples of good practice.
- The 3R's group would be reinstated with the aim of developing a working plan.
- Positive examples from the Farm included:
  - The NIRD Trust had funded equipment that would replace animal procedures in some measures.
  - A project was in hand to develop in vivo systems to reduce the number of animals required for the development of novel vaccines.
- It was important to capture these examples which demonstrated engagement with the 3R's strategy.
- Following implementation of the strategy it would be important to repeat the self-assessment exercise again to see progress.

### **Named person Job Description**

One action required the University to ensure that the Named roles of employees holding these be formally recognised in job descriptions and formally reviewed in the course of annual Performance Development Reviews. The AWERB noted that the line managers of all Named roles had been written to that effect; ██████████ agreed to chase up responses.

**Action:** ██████████

The AWERB discussed whether an NTCO should be appointed for the Farm. It was noted that discussions were taking place with colleagues working at the Farm to ascertain if some of the NACWO duties could be moved to free up capacity for the NTCO responsibilities. An update on progress would be given to a future meeting.

**Action:** ██████████

### **Refresher Training**

Further discussion was required on this item and would be brought back to a future meeting.

**Action:** ██████████

It was noted that the Farm kept a spreadsheet detailing training/procedures undertaken by colleagues. The spreadsheet provider alerts as and when colleagues needed retraining. The frequency of training for some procedures would be discussed with the NVS.

### **AWERB's Statutory Function**

A review had been undertaken of the list of formal AWERB responsibilities (as identified/explained in the Guidance on the operation of the Act) to assess whether these – via standing items on the AWERB meeting agenda - were all covered/undertaken by the AWERB in the course of its business.

Given the constitution of AWERB, these responsibilities were discharged by people who sat on the committee. Some were undertaken by 'the AWERB' acting as a body whereas others (provision of advice, support for Named persons etc) were done by individuals who were AWERB members – in the course of their designated roles.

It was suggested that the AWERB would not be able to best answer the 'is AWERB discharging its responsibilities?' question by having each of these responsibilities/tasks given standing item status at each termly meeting. Rather, it was proposed that there was an agenda item at one AWERB meeting each year – provisionally entitled 'AWERB mandated responsibilities –

compliance confirmation'. Under that heading, the AWERB could receive, discuss and approve a short paper that listed the dozen or so responsibilities and documented, for the record, how these had been met during the preceding year.

The AWERB was supportive of this approach with a paper at its Autumn Term that listed the mandated responsibilities and reports on evidenced compliance.

Action: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] agreed to produce an online form to seek the view of AWERB on their activity.

Action: [REDACTED]

The AWERB agreed that it would be timely to review its activities at the Autumn Term meeting each year.

### Audit of facilities

The AWERB noted that Home Office facilities audits had taken place at the Farm (piggery) and the BRU recently.

The in-person inspection of the Farm had been followed up by a further online meeting. No critical or major findings, or actions were required following the inspection. A formal response was still awaited in respect of the BRU.

The AWERB agreed that the reports of both audits should be reported internally for information to the relevant research committees.

Action: [REDACTED]

## 23/05 Report from Technical Services

It was noted that:

- Rat Streptococcus - Routine testing of SD sentinel rats from [REDACTED] had shown Group B Beta-haemolytic Streptococcus. Oral samples were taken from SD rats on arrival from both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] animals for testing. The [REDACTED] samples came back clear, the [REDACTED] samples, however, tested positive. [REDACTED] had stated that their screening was clear, but a second screen of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] SD rats on arrival showed that the [REDACTED] rats were negative and the [REDACTED] rats positive in all 5 samples submitted. The NVS had suggested testing Wistar rats from [REDACTED] on arrival to see if these tested positive too. Clinical signs were very rare and there was no known interference with research. It was not guaranteed that if future animals were obtained from the alternative supplier, [REDACTED], that they would be negative as the pathogen was not on their exclusion list.
- AMS BRU - The AMS BRU had now been cleared, cleaned and handed over to Estates. This had involved each room being given a decontamination certificate.
- Estates – A meeting had been held with estates management in December to give a presentation on BRU requirements and why it was vital to respond promptly and effectively to equipment faults and breakdown. The meeting covered the impacts that a failure in the animals environment could have, whether welfare, legal or research related. From this meeting it was decided that there would be a meeting held every 6 weeks between Estates and BRU management to keep each other better informed of current issues and any planned work.

23/06 Communications

The AWERB received the Animals in Science newsletter for January 2023. It was noted that the RSPCA had published a link to their new 'AWERB members' microsite.

The item on the Communications Strategy was deferred to the next meeting.

23/07 Items for future meetings

It was suggested that the AWERB visit the Farm and BRU, alternating each year, so that they had an appreciation of activity on the ground.

The AWERB were asked for their thoughts on the format of the meetings and how communications could be improved between meetings. It was noted that a Teams site would be established and that this could be a repository of information, discussion channel between meetings.

23/08 Any other business

The AWERB discussed whether the names of its membership should be published in Minutes that were publicly available. The AWERB agreed that these should not be made available externally.

██████████ highlighted to AWERB details of a recently advertised event from the RSPCA on Maximising the effectiveness of AWERB.

██████████ informed the AWERB that ██████ would be attending an RSPCA event 'Focus on Fish' as well as the IAT congress which included a session on Technician Wellbeing.

Discussions were taking place with Technical Services in regard to making Schedule 1 users undertake mandatory theory training.

23/09 Dates of meetings in the Session 2022-23

Thursday 11 May 2023 at 10.00 am