

## ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

A meeting of the AWERB was held at 11:00 on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

**Location:**  
Online

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**Summary of actions**

Item	Action	Due
4.	To share ASC AWERB hub materials with AWERB.	October 2024
7.	To make minor updates to Membership and to be endorsed by Chair's action.	October 2024
8.	To make a minor update to Unsupported Procedures Policy (add forced swim test document reference and correct minor typo) and to be endorsed by Chair's action.	October 2024
12.	To amend Lay summary form and PP slide template to include a question about funding. Then, to be endorsed by Chair's action.	October 2024

**Minutes**

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 <i>(10 mins)</i>	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> Apologies were noted.  Welcome to the two new NACWO members.  An academic member will be stepping down in the next few months. We thank them for their contributions to AWERB and will be looking to recruit another member.		
2.		<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b> Minutes were agreed as accurate and approved for publishing.	Approved	AWERB/2425/06
3		<b>Matters Arising/Actions</b>  Ongoing actions regarding policies are in progress.  We are in the process of finding a new AWERB member from Estates since the previous one has retired. There will be an interim member while a replacement is found.		AWERB/2425/07
4.	11:10 <i>(20 mins)</i>	<b>General updates</b>  <u>Establishment Licence updates</u>  PEL changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A new NACWO member was added and the previous one was removed.</li> <li>- Changed NACWO assigned to rodent rooms.</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u> AWERB was updated that we have had 5 Standard Condition 18's submitted since the last meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A PIL holder with a possible missed dosing.</li> </ul>		

- 2 x mice from the same colony had been found dead. This has been discussed with NVS and the colony was being monitored.
- 1 x mouse had been euthanised after a small injury caused by gavage tube.
- 1 x ageing mouse had been found dead. Aged mice care and body condition score were discussed among NVS, technicians and researchers.

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#### Compliance issues

AWERB members were updated on two potential non-compliance issues that have been reported since the last meeting.

- 1 x PNC – A lack of compliance with Schedule 1 technique (no confirmation of death after Schedule 1). Subsequently, the issue was discussed with the PPL holder and their team. The PIL Holder involved will undergo retraining and has been removed from the list of trainers.
- 1 x PNC – A procedure (biopsy) on rats was performed by a technician without having rats on their personal licence. They had been trained on this, but it was not added to their licence yet. The issue has been discussed with the technician.

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#### Updates from Named Persons Meeting

There has not been a meeting since our last AWERB meeting. The NIO, NTCO and HOLC are working on a Home Office audit to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice. This involves work on the 3Rs policy, the compliance policy and the security policy, and collaboration with the security team and estates. A training session has been delivered to the Estates Team to refresh new members of the team on their responsibilities to maintain the designated spaces with the ASPA Code of Practice.

A discussion about gavage needles took place and it was clarified that they are tubes, although commonly referred to as needles.

#### Update from BSU Board meeting

The meeting focused primarily on BSU charge rates for the upcoming years. The university is reviewing its core facilities, and BSU and ARC finances are being reviewed.

The introduction of different rate levels was discussed:

- Experimental rate: A higher rate band for experimental animals that require additional BSU staff support, such as post-operative monitoring, dosing and sampling by experienced BSU staff. BSU staff would get involved more actively in research, which was seen as a positive development.
- Breeding Level 2: A new service related to breeding colonies is in consideration, allowing BSU to manage breeding for users, potentially improving compliance and adhering better to the 3Rs (with better management of breeding colonies). This would come with its own rate.

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A discussion took place on the implications of differentiated rates for animal services.

- AWERB members acknowledged the tension between financial concerns and ethical responsibility.
- NVS shared reflections on technician-led models, communication challenges, and the value of offering

diverse options to support both scientific integrity and animal welfare.

- A discussion took place on achieving full cost recovery with shared resources, balancing educational and financial needs, and the lack of awareness about including facility and staff costs in grant proposals.

#### Estates

AWERB members were informed that earlier this month, a booklice infestation in BSU facilities occurred, but they did not reach the designated rooms. It was recognised that fumigation scheduling needed to be increased.

A discussion about booklice control including reducing humidity and other measures took place.

#### CoC update

CoC meetings are ongoing and workshops on various topics have been led successfully and well received by the animal care staff.

CoC team is progressing on communications strategies and other initiatives to promote animal care and research staff well being and moral.

Concerns about challenges due to staffing shortages were shared with AWERB members.

AWERB members were updated on office spaces. It was emphasised that it is important to be co-located with animal facilities to prevent staff from being distant and less effective. The need for a long-term solution regarding office space was acknowledged.

#### NTCO update

##### Training and reassessments

- Schedule 1 training and competency assessments – mice, rats and fish.
- Training SC administration – mice.
- Training and competency assessment tunnel handling – mice.
- Training, oral gavage – mice.

#### PIL courses

- PIL Practical completed for 1 x fish candidate.
- Multiple candidates currently attending PIL A/B course this week.

#### Other courses attended

- NACWO course completed for new BSU NACWO.
- Lunch and learn session with the NVS, BSU technicians and researchers from 2 groups completed at the beginning of month, with the focus on body condition scoring and grimace scale – mice.
- NTCO and Head of BRF attended UTG Trainers Day in Bristol.
- Module KD course completed, and comms sent out.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some members of the ARC attended The European Zebrafish Husbandry Association meeting held in Hungary.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other courses coming up</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lunch and learn for ARC technicians to be planned for NVS November Visit.</li> <li>LASA PELH meeting next week.</li> </ul> <p><u>HOLC update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Three Project License (PPL) expirations are approaching, with two replacements already granted. One more replacement has been submitted to the Home Office.</li> <li>The HO have extended their statutory deadline for response to standard condition 18's, to four weeks.</li> <li>Although not formally announced, the statutory response to PPL's submitted (both new and amendments) is possibly going to extend to 55 working days instead of 40 working days.</li> <li>It has not been formally announced, but there is some error with expiry dates issued recently to new PPLs -they are correcting the PPLs given one day over the permissible five-year cycle. HOLC will keep an eye on this</li> <li>HOLC attended the ASC AWERB hub (all AWERB members were invited to attend also), where discussion took place on the expectations of AWERB and induction/training, plus the reforming of the local AWERB hubs, which originally started up to share best practice. Materials will be shared after the meeting (<i>ACTION</i>).</li> <li>There was no update from the planned October HOLTIF meeting as this was cancelled.</li> <li>A discussion took place among AWERB members regarding Home Office inspector shortages and licensing errors.</li> </ul> <p>Minor errors have been reported concerning the licenses, such as issues with expiry dates and keeping alive sections. PPL holders are advised to check their licenses for accuracy.</p>		
5.	11:30 (5 Mins)	<p><b>3Rs initiatives/updates</b></p> <p>There is an ongoing work to test a smaller plastic oral gavage tube as a refinement.</p> <p>The ARC team is exploring alternatives to fin clipping for genotyping, which will reduce the need for anaesthesia and tissue sampling in fish and speed up results using a new machine designed for zebrafish embryo genotyping (ZEG).</p> <p>AWERB members were informed about the 3Rs Symposium in December, which will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A morning academic session focused on NC3Rs-funded research.</li> <li>An afternoon session with invited speakers, including representatives from NC3Rs, FRAME and Red Kite Vets.</li> </ul>		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A discussion panel on the use of AI in advancing 3Rs practices.</li> <li>- Flash talks, poster awards, and an invited stand emphasising on emotional resilience in animal research.</li> <li>-</li> </ul> <p>NVS shared a positive experience from a recent meeting with the BSU team and researchers, discussing study results and potential refinement for future studies. The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration and feedback between researchers and animal care staff.</p>		
6.	11:35 (10 mins)	<p><b>Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit</b> (<i>verbal update</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVS gave verbal update of the 2<sup>nd</sup> October visit, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This visit was centred on the rodents and included a 'lunch and learn' session for the technicians on body condition scoring, grimace scale, and monitoring aging animals.</li> <li>○ Some behaviour work was being performed on the day, providing the opportunity to discuss this work with the researcher, and see the setup of the Barnes maze.</li> <li>○ There were few health concerns on the day, the mice showing concerns were all examined and followed up as required.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There is a new study planned with trout involving placement of three cannulas for 72 hours to allow collections of samples over that time period. We are working with the research group, NTCO and NACWOs to find ways to ensure training and competency is in place for this complex study.</li> <li>• There have been some concerns with the shrimp over the last week or so. A high number of deaths were seen over a short period of time. The suspicion is that there was a sudden change in the quality of the tap water. Discussions have been had about potential solutions. Currently, the colony appears to have returned to normal, but if further issues occur, changes in the system may be required.</li> <li>• Health screens of zebrafish were as expected ). The recent health screens of rodents were clean.</li> <li>• Review of overseas projects by AWERB is complex and has led to some discussion this month.</li> <li>• Throughout the month, we have been involved with queries about imports, exports, health concerns, procedures, new PPLs, and PPL amendments.</li> </ul> <p>Following the NVS update, an AWERB member raised concerns about the recruitment of new academics and the challenges faced by animal units regarding health screening approval. The need for additional quarantine facilities was considered as a solution to mitigate these issues, although this would increase costs and logistics and affect cost recovery. The NVS did not agree that there was a need for an additional quarantine but suggested that what was being described would be a separate dirty facility.</p>		
7.	11:45 (10 mins)	<b>Review of 2024/2025 Terms of Reference and Membership</b>	<i>ToR approved Membership for revision</i>	AWERB/2425/08 a,b

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Membership - New members have been added. It needs minor updates and to be endorsed by Chair once updated (<i>ACTION</i>).</li> <li>Terms of Reference - tasks required by the Home Office remain the same but there were a couple of minor changes regarding Non-ASPA animal work</li> </ul> <p>The changes to the ToR were discussed, and they were subsequently approved.</p>		
8.	11:55 (10 mins)	<p><b>Review of updated Unsupported Procedures Policy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AWERB members were informed that the policy had been updated several months ago and presented to the committee for review. The aim of the updates was to make the policy more user-friendly and to encourage initial discussions regarding unsupported procedures with the NACWOs and NVSs.</li> <li>Alternatives for unsupported procedures were included in the document to provide clearer options, ensuring that each unsupported item had corresponding alternatives listed.</li> <li>NVS expressed her support for the changes and mentioned a recent report from the ASC regarding the forced swim test. The policy document will reference this report, as it provides additional context and information.</li> </ul> <p>Therefore, this policy needs a minor update to add the forced swim test reference and minor typo corrections. Following this, it will need to be endorsed by the Chair (<i>ACTION</i>). It will be reviewed in 6 months.</p>	For revision	AWERB/2425/09
9.	12:05 (20 mins)	<p><b>Update on NC3Rs self-assessment and action plan</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion focuses on the progress update for the NC3Rs self-assessment tool. It has made advances in adhering to the 3Rs framework for animal research. However, a more cohesive 3Rs strategy to improve institutional practices is needed. Some points that were discussed are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Development of an institutional 3Rs policy and creation of a 3Rs subgroup.</li> <li>Identifying academic 3Rs leads and champions within departments/ subjects, as well as enhancing resources, financial backing, and training.</li> <li>Writing a 3Rs newsletter</li> <li>Implementing 3Rs questions in appraisals, interviews and establishing more formal 3Rs training for those involved in animal work.</li> <li>Implementation and promotion of 3Rs training within UoE.</li> <li>Updating the BRF SharePoint with 3Rs activities, initiative and funding information.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Discussions are ongoing with the research ethics team to improve how the 3Rs are addressed in ethics applications, particularly for non-regulated animal work. The team is considering creating an ethics committee focused only on animal work (particularly for non-ASPA regulated projects).</li> </ul>		

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWERB members were advised on the lack of sufficient resources, including funding and dedicated personnel, to drive the 3Rs agenda. More investment is needed.</li> <li>• Concerns were raised about creating additional committees, with suggestions to ensure they are effective without overburdening staff.</li> <li>• A discussion took place emphasising the need for a strong business case for the 3Rs strategy, including funding and staffing support. AWERB members agreed that a detailed 3Rs strategy and additional resources are essential for meaningful progress.</li> </ul>		
11.	12:25 (5 mins)	<b>Update on Chair's Action</b>  <u>Regulated</u>  The chair provided an update covering decisions made since the July meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 x PPL Amendments were approved.</li> <li>• 1 x PPL has been transferred to the UoE.</li> <li>• 1 x PPL has been approved.</li> </ul> <u>Non-ASPA</u> Two projects involving overseas animal work are in AWERB review process. These will be addressed in future updates.		
12.	12:30 (30 mins)	<b>Any Other Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lay member mentioned changes in local politics. The bill to phase out animal research in favour of human-specific techniques was commented on, along with its implications.</li> <li>• Concerns over a project amendment were raised. AWERB member questioned the addition of a new species in a project without clear evidence of benefit and lack of funding, also considering that the licence has only 1 year left. Other members agreed that this application needs further consideration and discussion.</li> <li>• The amendment Lay summary form and the PP slide template to include a question about funding (<i>ACTION</i>).</li> <li>• A general discussion took place, where there was a consensus on the need to balance ethical concerns, funding scrutiny, and support for early-career researchers while ensuring project feasibility.</li> </ul>		
13.	13:00	<b>End</b>		

**Date of next meeting:**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2024 Online