

## ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

A meeting of the AWERB was held at 11:00 on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**Location:**  
online

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**Summary of actions**

Item	Action	Due
9	Policy for maintaining protected animals and Policy on training and competency for the use of animals in research to undergo minor changes and then for approval by Chair's action.	March 2025

**Minutes**

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 (10 mins)	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> Apologies were noted. No new members have joined AWERB.		
2.		<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025</b> Minutes were agreed as accurate and approved for publishing.	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/22
3.		<b>Matters Arising/Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>HOLC emailed AMWG team with AWERB members' comments on Animals materials framework.</li> <li>Head of REC&amp;G stated that discussions are ongoing regarding changes to research ethics structures and clarified that AWERB will be consulted as well.</li> <li>The Policy for maintaining protected animals has been brought back to this meeting for review. However, the Policy for maintaining breeding colonies is currently being updated.</li> <li>A discussion took place about data protection re AWERB papers. It was agreed that AWERB members will be allowed to download the papers, but they will have to be deleted once they are not needed anymore.</li> </ul>		AWERB/2425/23
4.	11:10 (35 mins)	<b>New PPL review</b> <u>New PPL AWERB/2425/24 was reviewed by AWERB.</u>  Summary of presentation: The researcher presented their study on neuronal connectivity in the mammalian brain, discussing objectives, funding, and the search for non-animal alternatives. They outlined experimental design, including sample size determination and the use of the Experimental Design Assistant to refine study quality. A harm-benefit analysis was conducted, with no severe protocols included. The project involves breeding and maintenance of GMO, obtaining animal tissue for analysis and delivery of substances through surgery. The study follows the 3Rs and aims to advance science, support clinical research, aid pharmaceutical development, and inform education policy.  Discussion summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several AWERB members congratulated the researcher for the quality of the presentation, the draft PPL and the lay summary.</li> <li>Minor amendments to lay summary were advised.</li> <li>Questions about the intervention used and endpoints measured were clarified.</li> </ul>	<i>For revision</i>	AWERB/2425/24

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The researcher explained the main challenges faced with the study procedures.</li> </ul> <p>Minor changes are needed and then to be re-reviewed and endorsed by Chair's action.</p>		
5.	11:45  (10 mins)	<p><b>General updates</b></p> <p><u>Establishment Licence updates</u> None.</p> <p><u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u> No SC18 reports this month. Although there is one which needs to be completed retrospectively as, last September, adverse effects not covered on a PPL where seen. Head of BRF will follow up.</p> <p><u>Compliance issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Head of BRF has conducted PPL Standard Conditions training sessions for all PPLh, reminding them of their adherence to SC's on their licenses.</li> <li>- BRF User meeting reminding BRF Users of requirements for Study Request Forms, Training Records and SOPs/DOPS as well as other reminders including our work to be Audit ready.</li> <li>- PIL Standard Condition training sessions to be arranged.</li> </ul> <p><u>Updates from Named Persons Meeting</u> The NPM was changed to an audit session this month, covering the requirements of the PEL Standard Conditions and establishment requirements.</p> <p><u>Update from BSU Board meeting</u> Reminders of Audits and good engagement with HoD's to support Audits.</p> <p><u>Estates</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ongoing work on previously discussed projects, including the gas bottle system redesign in the facilities.</li> <li>- Progress continues on the LTHW replacement project within the facilities.</li> <li>- Ventilation improvements for the HSE audit have begun, with further discussions planned.</li> <li>- A booklice review meeting is scheduled to develop a business case for funding continued treatment.</li> <li>- Lighting and time clock issues in a facility have been resolved, with further maintenance ongoing.</li> <li>- Appreciation was expressed for the Estates team's efforts in addressing facility needs.</li> </ul> <p><u>NTCO update</u> <u>Training and Competency Assessments</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training identification tattooing – mouse pups</li> <li>• Training sub cutaneous injection - mice</li> <li>• Training intra nasal administration - mice</li> <li>• Competency assessment in Intra Peritoneal injection - mice</li> <li>• Competency reassessment for intravaginal administration - mice</li> <li>• Trainers' competency assessment ultrasonic vocalisations – mouse pups</li> <li>• Trainers' competency assessment self-righting reflex – mouse pups</li> </ul>		

		<p><u>PIL courses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PIL A/B Practical completed for 2 x fish candidates</li> <li>• 2 x PIL C practical courses completed</li> <li>• 2 x rodent PIL practical's TBA</li> </ul> <p><u>Other courses attended</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWERB workshop last week for new NACWOs and AWERB members</li> </ul> <p><u>Courses coming up</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zebrafish genotyping training in February</li> </ul> <p><u>HOLC update</u> The HOLC recently attended the HOLTIF meeting with the Home Office and the main updates were:</p> <p><b>Reform</b> – ASRU (Home Office) are near to finalising operating model and they are now recruiting internally, this includes inspectors and also new roles call the RDO.</p> <p><b>Audits</b> –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No further updates on the types of audits yet, as feedback and development are ongoing this year.</li> <li>• Audits will focus on key areas of non-compliance, with both inspectors and RDO involved.</li> <li>• The new role RDO who will work with veterinary or medical inspectors, through interviewing and supporting interviews at establishments, reviewing establishment documentation, and analysing information collected about establishments against legal requirements.</li> <li>• The 3Rs is a focus for the inspectors, although they highlighted that they are not experts in 3Rs methodology, but will look for systems that are in place to ensure 3Rs.</li> </ul> <p><b>SC18's</b> – establishments should not expect an inspector response to the SC 18 reports submitted. Unless there are any issues and they are referred to the Enforcement team, establishments will not hear further. However, PPLh are responsible for regularly reviewing the SC18 reports they submit, ensuring any actions are being done.</p> <p><b>ASPEL</b> –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improving areas of PPL application focusing on protocols (enabling re-use of standard GA protocols within the application) - developed and at testing stage.</li> <li>• Improving the Named persons application form in ASPEL to ensure they capture the information required – at development stage.</li> </ul> <p>The HOLC recently sent an email around to AWERB members regarding the latest Home Office request to the ASC for advice on strengthening the functioning of AWERBs and Named Information Officer.</p>		
6.	11:55 (10 mins)	<p><b>Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit</b> (<i>verbal update</i>) NVS give verbal update of their activities since last meeting, including:</p> <p><u>Facilities visit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVS did a rodent-centred visit, where a small number of mice were examined for health concerns. These concerns were addressed in collaboration with NACWOs,</li> </ul>		

		<p>technicians, and researchers to ensure the welfare of the animals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An aged mouse was showing health concerns and found by the NACWO. The PIL was contacted, and the mouse was euthanised. The PME indicated this was unrelated to the regulated procedure but likely related to the age of the animal. No other mice of similar age were affected.</li> </ul> <p><u>Training and Additional Activities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A PIL C practical was undertaken for 2 candidates, outside NVS duties.</li> <li>NVS attended the online Audit Information session in January, and ongoing discussions with PPLh regarding PPL applications and amendments are taking place.</li> </ul> <p><u>Other:</u> There have also been discussions about the potential re-homing of fish between facilities.</p>		
7.	12:05 (10 mins)	<p><b>3Rs initiatives/updates and Culture of Care</b></p> <p>Culture of Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upcoming CoC half day meeting in April - The focus will be on reflecting on actions from last year, identifying progress and achievements, gaps, and new and continued action plan into 2025/2026. Emotional resilience for BRF staff will also be a key topic in the meeting. Two CoC meetings are planned for each year, including a social event.</li> <li>Other actions on the CoC working group are continuing such as Academic/ BRF Technician engagement meetings, BRF User meetings, Communication enhancement, BRF newsletters etc.</li> </ul> <p>3Rs activity updates this month</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was highlighted that a 3Rs Working Group is being established for Exeter. This group aims to develop the mission and vision statement for the 3Rs strategy at the UoE. The group is establishing a SharePoint site to store 3Rs-related materials, which will be accessible to all and will inform policies and practices, training and capturing of 3Rs initiatives and achievements.</li> <li>Zebrafish Initiative and skin swabbing demonstration - This initiative aims to reduce fin clipping and promote the use of skin swabbing as an alternative. A demonstration will be delivered for PhD students. NVS will attend the session. A follow-up email will be sent to ensure that all relevant team members are informed.</li> <li>The guppy research in Exeter is closing and the fish will be rehomed. In Cornwall, diurnal temperature cycles are being applied to the guppy population to better understand behavioural and physiological responses to environmental changes.</li> <li>Refinements have been made to the CO2 Schedule 1 equipment to reduce the stress in mice.</li> <li>Upcoming meeting on reporting initiatives to improve reproducibility in research, focusing on fish but with potential benefits across other species.</li> <li>A 3Rs table was created to track current practices, desired practices, and progress on 3Rs activities across all the BRF facilities. Once established this table will be available and live on the 3Rs SharePoint site.</li> </ul>		



		<p>AWERB agreed that once the policy’s minor change has been made this can go to the Chair for approval (<i>ACTION</i>).</p> <p><u>Policy on training and competency for the use of animals in research</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update of T&amp;C Policy to reflect changes/ updates to ASRU guidance such as training required for Sch1 now.</li> <li>• It was clarified that the policy applies to all individuals working with animals, including PPLs, PILS, NP and NLAU (Non-Licence Animal Users - such as animal care staff/ Sch1 Users).</li> <li>• Change of frequency for reassessment from 2 years to 3 years.</li> <li>• Defining Trainers (those competent to train) and Assessors ("The Establishment" - so NACWOS/ NTCO/ NVS).</li> <li>• Also including D grade members of BRF teams to train in Sch1 and Animal care.</li> <li>• CPD recording - re-emphasised and importance of this. AWERB member commented to change records from "Course detail" to "CPD detail".</li> <li>• It was highlighted the 35-hour annual CPD recommendation and clarified that CPD can include courses, webinars, literature reviews, lab meetings, and conferences.</li> <li>• Re-iterated the need to liaise with the NTCOs regularly who will always be able to help and advise and guide as needed and work through requirements of studies.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB agreed that once the policy’s minor changes have been done this can go to the Chair for approval (<i>ACTION</i>).</p>		
<p>10.</p>	<p>12:40 (5 mins)</p>	<p><b>Amendment proposals to the University’s Animal Policies</b></p> <p><u>Summary of proposed changes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change terminology from "animal tissue" to "animal materials" for ASPA protected species and decapod crustaceans.</li> <li>• Teaching: Targeting a complete phase-out of protected species in teaching by 2030 of live animals being brought in and euthanised solely for the purposes of teaching. Establishing clear responsibility for animal care between arrival and use in teaching sessions.</li> <li>• Ethical oversight: All animal use, including commercially sourced animals and outreach work, must undergo ethical review.</li> </ul> <p><u>Current policies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from researchers and NACWOs indicates that our three policies are often ambiguous.</li> <li>• Current policies do not clearly cover all animal-related activities, especially those involving invertebrates, commercially sourced animals, temporary housing for teaching purposes, and outreach work.</li> <li>• There is a need to align policies with evolving external expectations, including funder requirements and legal changes, such as the Animal Sentience Act, which recognises decapod crustaceans as sentient beings.</li> </ul>	<p><i>For review</i></p>	<p>AWERB/2425/30 AWERB/2425/31-a-c</p>

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		<p>A discussion took place on further involvement with stakeholders including teaching department to ensure smooth implementation and avoid unnecessary disruptions.</p> <p>AWERB members will have two-week period to review and provide feedback on the proposed changes.</p>		
11.	12:45 (5 mins)	<p><b>Return of Procedures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWERB members were reminded that ROPs have been made publicly available on the Animals in Research webpage since 2014 and HOLC provided a link.</li> <li>• AWERB member suggested introducing context around the numbers of ZF used as many are embryos/ larvae rather than adult fish. A discussion took place on wording around purpose categories. HOLC explained that while reporting must follow HO guidelines, additional explanations have been added on the website to clarify the purpose behind each category.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB approved the summary for publication, subject to adding contextual information to improve clarity for the public.</p>	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/32a .b
12.	12:50 (5 mins)	<p><b>Update on Chair's Action</b></p> <p><u>ASPA regulated</u> Recently endorsed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• x1 PPL Amendment</li> <li>• x1 Production of Antibodies Assessment Form</li> </ul> <p><u>Non-ASPA</u> Two non-ASPA applications are currently being reviewed by AWERB sub-group for animal work involving turtles and bats overseas.</p>		
13.	12:55	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> None.</p>		
14.	13:00	<p><b>End</b></p>		

**Date of next meeting:**Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> March, Hybrid.