

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

**Location:**

████████████████████ (In-person) and TEAMS (online)

**Summary of actions**

Item	Action	Due
8	The Policy for maintaining breeding colonies needs updating and then to be brought back to AWERB for review	May 2025

**Minutes**

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 (10 mins)	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> Apologies were noted.		
2.		<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025</b> Minutes were agreed as accurate and approved for publishing.	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/33
3.		<b>Matters Arising/Actions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action 18 – the non-ASPA animal policies amendment proposal document will have minor edits and will be brought back to AWERB in April.</li> <li>Action 9 – The Policy for maintaining breeding colonies has been brought back to this meeting for re-review.</li> <li>Action 13 – Since the last meeting, minor changes to the Policy for maintaining protected animals and Policy on Training and Competency have been completed and both were approved via Chair’s action.</li> </ul>		AWERB/2425/34
4.	11:10 (35 mins)	<b>New PPL review</b> <u>New PPL AWERB/2425/35 was reviewed by AWERB.</u> Summary of presentation: The researcher presented their study on cellular mechanisms underlying neurodegeneration which may in turn support novel treatment approaches. No severe protocols included. Objectives and funding were discussed. They outlined the strategy for finding non-animal alternatives and the reasons why the animal model is still needed. The experimental design was explained. This included sample size determination and the use of the Experimental Design Assistant (with G*Power). A harm-benefit analysis was conducted, suggesting an 80% of mild animal suffering. The study follows the 3Rs and has several plans for improving replacement, refinement and reduction of live animals.  Discussion summary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AWERB praised the exhaustive search for alternatives, and the explanation of why they were not feasible, the 3Rs and the harm-benefit analysis.</li> <li>Discussions took place around the age of euthanasia.</li> </ul>	<i>For revision</i>	AWERB/2425/35

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant agreed to add mitigations for the adverse events discussed.</li> <li>• A discussion took place about the proteins that accumulate and the method of culturing tissue.</li> <li>• Biostatistician advised adding the use of G*Power and EDA to the PPL and the applicant agreed. The applicant was also cautioned that preliminary experiments tend to overestimate the effect size and further experiments might be needed.</li> <li>• AWERB member recommended the correction of a typo.</li> <li>• NVS sought some clarifications about the proportion of animals experiencing moderate severity. Additionally, a discussion took place clarifying that the method stated is actually limb clasp response.</li> <li>• A correction of the required number of mice was advised, as there is a mismatch across the PPL draft.</li> <li>• Lay member asked for an explanation of what tau protein is and requested clarification in the lay summary. It was also suggested that the non-animal alternatives section needs clarification or more non-technical language</li> </ul>		
5.	11:45  (20 mins)	<p><b>General updates</b></p> <p><u>Establishment Licence updates</u> None.</p> <p><u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u> One SC18 report for secondary availability PPL has been submitted this month.</p> <p>A discussion took place about the HO responses to SC18.</p> <p><u>Compliance issues</u> No compliance issues. Regarding the audit work, three sessions of PIL Standard Condition training have been completed for all PILh. They were well received. More communication and interactions between NP and PIL/PPLh has been observed. In terms of staffing, there are four vacancies in our animal facilities.</p> <p><u>Updates from Named Persons Meeting</u> It was a busy meeting with good updates from all NPs &amp; HOLC. AWERB were informed of discussions held during the meeting regarding SC23 of PEL (Animal Exit from ASPA) and about creating policies/SOP for keeping alive, rehoming, reuse and setting free:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVS provided training on Re-use. It was agreed that there is no need for Re-use policy as ASRU guidance covers this.</li> <li>• Policy on rehoming and setting free needs review for next AWERB. Keeping alive section (for when animals remain in the Establishment) will also need to be added (TBA).</li> </ul>		

- Advice requested from HO regarding definition of a protected animal falling under ASPA rehoming requirements. Animal facilities are assuming all fall under these requirements currently and following guidance accordingly.

Update from BSU Board meeting

Several operational aspects were discussed:

- Vacancies already mentioned.
- 3Rs strategy.
- Costs and financial impact of recent policies approved by AWERB.

Estates

Estates representative could not attend and no update took place.

NTCO update

Training and Competency Assessments

- Animal handling training – mice
- Schedule 1 training – mice, rats and fish
- Oral gavage training – mice
- Training and competency sign off in Subcutaneous administrations – mice
- Training and competency in Intra-peritoneal administration - mice
- Training and competency assessments and trainers' assessment for fin clipping – Zebrafish
- Training and competency assessments for skin swabbing - Zebrafish

PIL courses

- PIL A/B Practical completed for 2 x rodent candidates
- 3 x candidates due to attend PIL A/B course at the end of the month

Other courses attended

- ZF skin swabbing workshop completed with researcher from an external University
- NACWO course for new NACWO
- In house local module course
- In house PIL audit session preparation courses

Courses coming up

- In-house module KD course will be run for 3 x fish candidates
- In-house lunch and learn session currently in planning phase with NVS for technicians. This time the topic is on common animal health concerns/flags and related treatment options.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-house PPL navigation course for anyone working under a PPL to provide general guidance on how to navigate through project licences.</li> </ul> <p><u>HOLC update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All AWERB members were invited to attend the next ASC AWERB Hub workshop. The focus will be on replacement with an item on practical advice for AWERBs on assessing replacement. The HOLC will recirculate the email and link to register.</li> <li>ASRU are looking to improve PPL application process and are seeking views from colleagues who participate in completing PPL applications, especially individuals who have used or will use standard protocols. It involves an interview with the ASRU researchers. The HOLC will recirculate the email again.</li> </ul>		
6.	12:05 (10 mins)	<p><b>Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit</b> (<i>verbal update</i>)</p> <p>NVS gave verbal update of their activities since last meeting, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were two visits since last AWERB.</li> <li>A rat line is finished as all data collected – the line has been cryopreserved so can be regenerated when needed.</li> <li>Advice provided on rodent imports and aquatic animal transport from fish facility to field alongside NACWOs and NTCO.</li> <li>ZF health screening – only known pathogens in facility detected.</li> <li>Problematic ZF line is being outcrossed to a different line.</li> <li>Skin swabbing workshop attended was a good move towards using more refined genotyping techniques. AWERB members were congratulated for their hard work coordinating and running this.</li> <li>Multiple non-regulated ethical reviews conducted.</li> <li>Amendments and PPL applications were reviewed.</li> <li>Health concerns discussed and managed as appropriate in co-ordination with the technicians, NACWOs and researchers.</li> <li>Health screening and passport checked and discussed for an import into quarantine.</li> <li>Participation in discussion around re-use and continued use during Named Persons meeting, and how best to incorporate this within documents, in addition to the ASRU advice notes already in place.</li> </ul>		
7.	12:15 (10 mins)	<p><b>3Rs initiatives/updates and Culture of Care</b></p> <p>3Rs strategy meeting was a success with good engagement from academics and NACWOs, Head of BRF, facility manger and HOLC. A potential mission statement for the 3Rs strategy was discussed and the following is under consideration: "Measurable, Celebratory and Institution Wide".</p> <p>3Rs initiatives developed this month:</p>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diurnal changes to water temperature in fish facility.</li> <li>• Replacement of live sentinels with technology in health screening at rodent facility.</li> <li>• PPLh is now using computer-generated videos of swordtails for stimuli instead of live fish, reducing animal use for some assays by two-thirds.</li> <li>• PPLh’s new systems allow testing of multiple visual and chemical stimuli within one assay, representing a refinement as it requires less netting of individual animals. The high throughput also means they have capacity to run various sub-threshold pilots to identify which populations are of most interest, which will eventually lead to a reduction in animals used under licence.</li> <li>• Skin Swabbing Workshop in fish facility with trainer from external University.</li> <li>• Rehoming of Guppies from fish facility to various universities and zoos in the UK.</li> <li>• PPLh is now snipping the last 1 inch from the feather of jackdaws instead of the whole feather for the analysis, reducing pain/discomfort from mild to none. Having a slightly shortened feather does not affect flight or manoeuvrability and is something commonly seen in nature. The feather will re-grow following moult.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB member suggested that all 3Rs initiatives should be recorded in a spreadsheet and shared across the institution. Head of BRF confirmed that this is a work in progress. The plan is to showcase them on a SharePoint site and also on a public-facing website. A discussion took place about the practicalities of facilitating this.</p> <p>Updates on Culture of Care included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning for CoC workshop in April: in the first half of the meeting we will discuss everything we have done and achieved over the last year to address the suggestions discussed at the last CoC workshop, and in the second half we will make plans for the year to come.</li> <li>• 4 desks be made available for BRF staff in one of the buildings close to the facilities</li> <li>• Celebration of the Animal Technologist Month: some organised activities include photo and cake baking competition with prizes, “guess who?” competition, BRF breakfast and word art with feedback from BRF researchers to Animal technologists.</li> </ul> <p>Lay member also praised the CoC initiatives that have taken place over the years. The head of BRF agreed and pointed out that the improved culture of the BRFs have improved with great communication and culture throughout the BRF facilities.</p>		
8.	12:25 (10 mins)	<p><b>Policy/guidance Review</b>  <u>Policy for maintaining breeding colonies</u></p>	For revision	AWERB/2425/36 AWERB/2425/37

		<p>This policy was discussed at AWERB two months ago and has undergone some updates following discussion with AWERB members. Some updates are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of GM passport in the policy. Each colony has its own passport, where there is information on breeding, feeding, etc.</li> <li>• Breeding age limit is now 6 to 8 months, but at 6 months there needs to be a discussion between NACWOs, breeding managers and owners of the colony to agree the limit for that colony.</li> <li>• Update of the link to NC3Rs breeding management tool.</li> <li>• Update of breeding ages for fish.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB member suggested that the policy should mention the current practice of having regular meetings with the PPLh to discuss breeding numbers and documenting everything in spreadsheets.</p> <p>Discussions took place about re-defining certain parameters covered by the policy (number of hours, volume of water, maximum age of fish...).</p> <p>The Chair concluded that the policy needs to be amended to acknowledge the outcome of the ongoing discussions. Once an agreement is reached and the policy is updated, it should be brought back to AWERB for review (<i>ACTION</i>).</p> <p>The following two policies have been brought back to AWERB to confirm that they are still up to date with current recommendations:</p> <p><u>REC guidance BTO special methods</u> The current version was approved as no one suggested any changes.</p> <p><u>REC guidance for animal work</u> No changes were required to the current version. It was also approved.</p>		AWERB/2425/38
9.	12:35 (10 mins)	<p><b>AWERB Role Descriptors</b></p> <p>The audit gap analysis detected that role descriptors were needed to clarify duties and responsibilities for the HO, and it will also be useful for new members to understand expectations. Approved if no feedback is received from AWERB members over the next week.</p>	Approved <i>unless changes are requested within a week</i>	AWERB/2425/39a-m
10.	12:45 (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 Change of PPL holder</li> <li>• x1 revised End of PPL review form</li> <li>• x1 Amendment</li> </ul> <p><u>Non-ASPA</u> Three non-ASPA projects endorsed by AWERB via Chair's action:</p>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• x2 that use procedures that would be regulated in the UK: one using bats in USA and, the other, turtles in Galapagos.</li><li>• x1 using cuttlefish.</li></ul> Two overseas projects are currently under review.		
11.	12:50	<b>Any Other Business</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Comments for the new PPL reviewed today should be provided by Thursday afternoon.</li><li>• The Chair thanked one of the Lay members who was stepping down, for the support provided to AWERB and the whole AWERB bid a fond farewell with applause, flowers and a card.</li></ul>		
12.	13:00	<b>End</b>		

**Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> April. Online