

A meeting of the AWERB was held at 11:00 on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

**Location:**

Online

**Summary of actions**

Item	Action	Due
	No actions were derived from this meeting.	

**Minutes**

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 (15 mins)	<b>Welcome and apologies</b> Apologies were noted. New additions and members leaving AWERB were announced: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A new NACWO has been added on the Establishment licence as a Named Person.</li> <li>• A new academic member specialised in rodents has been recruited.</li> <li>• The Head of REG&amp;C has left the University and a new Head has been recruited, to start at the end of August.</li> <li>• The Research Ethics Officer supporting AWERB will be leaving. A member of the REG&amp;C team will take over minute-taking duties until a new Research Ethics Officer is appointed.</li> <li>• One of the NVS will be stepping down from their role.</li> </ul>		
2.		<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2025</b> Minutes were agreed as accurate and approved for publishing.	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/54
3.		<b>Matters Arising/Actions</b> <u>Outstanding actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 3Rs Strategy and Compliance Policy are still in development.</li> <li>• Regarding the update to the animal policies, HOLC and Head of BRF are engaging with the relevant forums/committees in the research and education areas of the University as part of the consultation of the proposed amendments.</li> </ul> <u>Recently closed actions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two additional info links on replacement have been added in the PPL presentation template and SharePoint site.</li> <li>• The current published version of the needle reuse and rehoming policy has been approved without changes.</li> </ul> <u>PPL review discussion</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVS instigated a meeting to propose increasing the time for PPL review discussions. The Head of the BRF clarified that this is particularly important as this is the only time when PPLs face academic scrutiny.</li> </ul>		AWERB/2425/55

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The standing items will not be omitted completely, but they will be given less time, especially when there is more than a PPL review in a meeting. The NVS agreed that this flexibility can help maximise PPL review discussions while avoiding omitting other relevant information.</li> <li>• Culture of Care has been removed as a standing item. From now on, it will be added when there are updates.</li> <li>• The NTCO update will be a written report rather than verbal.</li> </ul> <p><u>SWARM allocation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The AWERB Chair is pushing for AWERB SWARM hours allocation to be recognised by faculty HoDs.</li> </ul>		
4.	11:15 (40 mins)	<p><b>PPL review</b>  <u>New PPL AWERB/2425/56 was reviewed by AWERB.</u>  This is a new PPL intended to replace the applicant's current one. The protocols remain largely unchanged.</p> <p>Summary of presentation:  The researcher presented their study on the use of genetically altered ZF, Arabian killifish and Mangrove killifish to obtain spawned eggs and embryos, which will be used to study the developmental effects of a range of physical, biological and chemical stressors. Scientific background, aims and funding were discussed. The researcher outlined the strategy for searching non-animal alternatives and the reasons why the animal model is still needed. The experimental design was explained. This included the experimental groups, sample size determination and the use of the EDA. No protected animals will be used for data collection. They will only be used for breeding and maintenance of genetically altered animals. These protocols are mild and moderate. There are no severe protocols or unsupported procedures. The potential benefits of the project were also discussed. The applicant explained how his study addresses the principles of the 3Rs.</p> <p>Discussion summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of non-protected animals for experiments was praised.</li> <li>• The researcher was advised that there is inconsistency in the sample size across the PPL.</li> <li>• A discussion took place about the housing duration of animals for genotyping. While the HO has standardised this at 72 hours, certain protocols require longer periods. It was confirmed that up to 7 days is acceptable, with efforts made to reduce this duration where feasible. Facilities will seek formal approval to proceed accordingly.</li> <li>• The applicant was asked to justify the age at which animals will stop being used. AWERB member asked to document this justification in the PPL.</li> </ul>	Revision required	AWERB/2425/56

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant clarified that tissue collection is limited to euthanised animals or embryos, with no tissue taken from protected animals.</li> <li>• A discussion took place regarding the approach used to determine which genetic pathways to focus on, given the broad scope of the project.</li> <li>• NVS advised that some revisions are required. The lay summary should include the expected impact on adult fish with a moderate phenotype. There was a discussion regarding the estimated percentage of fish likely to experience moderate effects, and the applicant was asked to provide a narrower estimate. The monitoring section should note how frequently it will be assessed, since body condition score is listed as an endpoint.</li> <li>• Head of BRF requested that the applicant provide more specific details, including examples of the toxic chemicals intended for use.</li> <li>• The applicant confirmed that embryos will be euthanised before becoming protected animals.</li> <li>• It was noted that the presentation did not clearly explain how the new PPL incorporates refinements compared to the current licence; the applicant was unable to clarify this during the meeting but stated that the refinements will be included in the application.</li> <li>• Clarification was also requested regarding the monitoring of side effects, as the current proposal appeared impractical to implement in practice.</li> <li>• AWERB deliberated about funding, the purpose of the PPL, the role of the collaborators in the project and the recognition of the applicant’s work by collaborators in the research output. There were concerns about the lack of detail in the PPL regarding the chemicals that the applicant was planning to use.</li> </ul> <p>The applicant is to revise their PPL, and detailed feedback will be provided.</p>		
5.	11:55 (15 mins)	<p><b>General updates</b></p> <p><u>Establishment Licence updates</u></p> <p>A new NACWO has been added to the establishment licence. NACWOs areas of responsibility have been updated on the Establishment Licence.</p> <p><u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u></p> <p>There have been 5 SC18:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two of these are due to three fish being found dead following identification by tagging. These incidents were thoroughly discussed with NVS and relevant NACWO, and now there is a clearer pathway on what should be done under that PPL</li> <li>• A mouse had to be euthanised due to presenting an adverse event not expected in the protocol.</li> <li>• Two mice were found dead without increasing monitoring as required by PPL. The incident was discussed with NVS</li> </ul>		

	<p>and NACWO and changes have been made to avoid this happening again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A young mouse was found dead.</li></ul> <p><u>Compliance issues</u> No compliance issues reported to HO. The Audit working group has re-grouped this month and are working on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Monthly Audit Gap Analysis Actions catch-ups.</li><li>• Compliance Policy.</li><li>• Security Policy.</li><li>• PPL Info Pack.</li><li>• Planning annual internal facility audits.</li></ul> <p>Lastly, the Head of BRF showed the presentation that AWERB submitted to the University Compliance Committee, which covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AWERB role</li><li>• New members</li><li>• How AWERB ensures compliance with the Concordat on Openness on Animals in research</li><li>• The compliance gap analysis</li><li>• A summary of all work completed by AWERB in 2024/25, including PPL reviews, policies reviewed, other reviews and other business</li></ul> <p><u>Updates from Named Persons Meeting</u> Summary of discussions in the meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The opening of a new facility.</li><li>• PPL pre-review process.</li><li>• Estates working group needs to deal with high temperatures in the facilities.</li><li>• Discussions about the 3Rs.</li></ul> <p><u>Update from BSU Board meeting</u> The board met last time in May and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The opening of the new facility.</li><li>• The recent HO audit.</li><li>• The 3Rs policy.</li><li>• BSU directorship.</li></ul> <p>An AWERB member mentioned that the fish facility will have a board soon and they will be able to provide similar updates then.</p> <p><u>Estates</u> Estates have participated in the following activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Supported the opening of a facility.</li><li>• Dealt with the issue of high temperatures in the facilities.</li><li>• Worked on the gas bottle system in the fish facility.</li><li>• Continued to work on HO spaces.</li></ul>		<p>AWERB/2425/57</p>
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6.	12:10 (5 mins)	<p><b>Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit</b> (<i>verbal update</i>)</p> <p><u>Rodents</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed breeding strategies of more complex GA mouse lines.</li> <li>• Have reviewed and updated rodent health screening across the rodent facilities – moved across to sentinel free environmental screens.</li> </ul> <p><u>Fish</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team now size sorting specific ZF lines twice in the nursery to try to bring best fish through for breeding into main room.</li> <li>• Still transitioning users from fin clipping to skin swabbing.</li> <li>• Review occurring of ZF health screening protocol which will reduce numbers of live sentinels needed.</li> <li>• No longer disinfecting ZF eggs within main facility, now we have established it is a high health status facility.</li> <li>• Review of rooms considering to be added to PEL and recommendations made.</li> </ul>		
7.	12:15 (5 mins)	<p><b>3Rs initiatives/updates</b></p> <p><u>Named persons meeting</u> A table intended for collecting 3Rs initiatives across University facilities was presented to the AWERB.</p>		

AWERB/2425/58

		<p><u>3Rs subgroup updates</u> A questionnaire is being developed to obtain researcher views on 3Rs activities to shape the University 3Rs strategy.</p> <p><u>Obtaining and sharing best practice on 3Rs nationwide (other establishments/AWERBs)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a ZF meeting in September. It will be a great opportunity to obtain and share best practice.</li> <li>• Head of BRF commented that there is a meeting happening with other Universities and 3Rs is a topic. AWERB will be updated about this in due course.</li> <li>• AWERB member mentioned that the End of PPL that was reviewed at this AWERB meeting is a great example of replacement.</li> <li>• NVS mentioned an example of seagull's blood samples being shared with other university so that they do not need to use live animals.</li> </ul>		
8.	12:20 (5 mins)	<p><b>Policy review</b> <u>Policy for maintaining breeding colonies within Exeter University – updated version</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This policy has had a lot of input and several rounds of updates since it first came to AWERB earlier in the year. The last version was presented to AWERB.</li> <li>• NACWO asked about the need to complete a GM risk assessment and request approval from the University GM committee for all GA strains, particularly in cases where animals are brought in at short notice. The Head of BRF clarified that a new risk assessment is not usually required; adding a new line to the existing assessment is sufficient and helps expedite the process.</li> </ul> <p>No further changes were suggested and the policy was approved.</p>	Approved	AWERB/2425/59
9.	12:25 (20 mins)	<p><b>PPL Mid-term review</b> <u>PPL mid-term form AWERB/2425/60 was reviewed by AWERB.</u></p> <p>Discussion summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A potential discrepancy was noted in the description of a tissue collection protocol, where the procedure is described as non-recovery, but the severity level listed in ASPeL is moderate. It would be worth correcting as otherwise it looks like mild and moderate cases were breaches of severity level.</li> <li>• AWERB member commented that it is not clear why PPLh used less animals than expected. Additional information on this will be requested.</li> <li>• Lay member mentioned that the content is not clear for the lay reader.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB members agreed that the form required revision.</p>	Revision required	AWERB/2425/60

		<p><u>PPL mid-term form AWERB/2425/61 was reviewed by AWERB.</u> Discussion summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWERB praised that this was a very thorough mid-term review form. The use of lidocaine in wildlife fish research was highlighted as an impressive 3Rs benefit.</li> <li>• Re the mortality rate shown by electronic tags, NVS suggested that it would be useful to know when these occurred and whether it happened when fish were on the deck.</li> <li>• NACWO suggested some ideas to add to the form, particularly to improve the 3Rs section.</li> <li>• Two AWERB members agreed that table 3a has a mistake and will need to be revised.</li> </ul> <p>AWERB members agreed that the form required revision.</p>	<i>Revision required</i>	AWERB/2425/61
		<p><u>PPL mid-term form AWERB/2425/62 was reviewed by AWERB.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AWERB member commented that it is a very well written form and praised that ex vivo models replaced some animal use and the proposed adoption of the 3Rs Water R approach into future studies.</li> <li>• NACWO asked why the number of animals used is very low compared to the expected. PPLh clarified that it is due to using other PPL at another University and due to funding.</li> <li>• NVS suggested to include in the retrospective review at the end of the PPL an explanation of how moving some of the proposed work to a collaborator's PPL has affected the total number of animals used for the project as a whole across both PPLs. This is aiming to show that the result of using two PPLs has not been that more animals have been used overall.</li> <li>• A question was raised regarding the potential use of human brain tissue. It was clarified that efforts are being made to obtain tissue from neurosurgeons, which could help reduce the number of mice required.</li> </ul> <p>There was agreement that the third mid-term review form was endorsed. The Chair asked for feedback on the forms as it is the first time they are used.</p>	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/62
10.	12:45 (5 mins)	<p><b>End of PPL review</b> <u>End of PPL AWERB/2425/63 was reviewed by AWERB.</u> The Chair informed AWERB members that this report is sparse due to the licence holder never carrying out any animal work and that this PPL was revoked earlier than the expiry date because the researcher is no longer a staff member and also not intending to do any animal work at Exeter. AWERB members mentioned that using organoids instead of animals is a great example of replacement and suggested it would be good to share this approach with other staff in the University. Everyone was in agreement to approve this end of PPL.</p>	<i>Endorsed</i>	AWERB/2425/63

11.	12:50 (5 mins)	<b>Update on Chair's Action</b> <u>Regulated project licences</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3x amendments were endorsed since the last meeting.</li><li>• Several PPL amendments in review still.</li></ul> <u>Non-ASPA projects</u> None since the last meeting.		
12.	12:55 (5 mins)	<b>Any Other Business</b> None.		
13.	13:00	<b>End</b>		

**Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025. Online