

A meeting of the AWERB was held at 11:00 on Tuesday 27th May 2025

Location: Online

Summary of actions

Item	Action	Due
9	AWERB members were asked to provide feedback by the end of next week on the current rehoming and needle reuse policies. If changes are suggested, Head of BRF will update the policy and bring back to AWERB for review.	June 25

Minutes

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 (10 mins)	Welcome and apologies Apologies were noted.		
2.		Minutes of the meeting held on 29th April 2025 Minutes were agreed as accurate and approved for publishing.	<i>Approved</i>	AWERB/2425/47
3.		Matters Arising/Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASPA Compliance Policy and 3Rs UoE Policy/Strategy are still being developed • A meeting will be held soon to discuss stakeholders who need to be involved in the consultation of the amendments proposed to the animal policies • The Policy for maintaining breeding colonies will be brought back for review next month • A meeting will be held soon to discuss what needs to be covered in the replacement section of the PPL and the presentation with the aim to develop guidance for applicants. 		AWERB/2425/48
4.	11:10 (15 mins)	General updates <u>Establishment Licence updates</u> None. <u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u> None. <u>Compliance issues</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorrect method of Sch1 confirmation of death in ZF due to request by PILh for training in this. PNC report submitted to HO • Animal husbandry not performed on a weekend due to non-arrival of husbandry cover person. There were no consequences on the animals' welfare. PNC report submitted to HO <u>Updates from Named Persons Meeting</u> Usual updates from the facilities and activities occurring.		

Reminder session to all about veterinary treatments and the importance of informing vets of all activities, as there needs to be an accurate record of them.

Discussions took place about the development of a new Event Log.

Discussions and preparations for ASRU audit included:

- Ensuring all labels, records and equipment were in order
- Ensuring areas were clean and tidy and up to/ exceeding ASPA Code of Practice requirements
- Ensuring 3Rs and Whistleblowing information/ posters were present
- Ensuring training records for all facility staff were up to date
- Supporting technical team so they were prepared to answer any questions

Update from BSU Board meeting

No recent meeting has taken place.

Estates

Head of BRF reported ongoing delays in Estates' response to maintenance requests affecting BRF areas. Actions are being implemented to improve efficiency and responsiveness. Communication channels with the Estates team will continue to be monitored and strengthened to ensure timely resolution of issues.

NTCO update

Training and Competency Assessments

- Animal handling training – mice
- Schedule 1 training and competency sign off – mice and small fish
- Training for Intravenous administrations – mice
- Training for oral gavage administrations – mice
- Competency assessment for oral administration - mouse pups
- Competency assessment for Intra-peritoneal (IP) administration – mouse pups
- Competency assessment for fin clipping – zebrafish
- Competency assessment for photography and weighing– small fish
- Competency assessment for skin swabbing – zebrafish

NACWO, NTCO, and visiting researchers from Cardiff University will be at Exeter to undertake training in mouse blood sampling via the tail vein.

		<p><u>PIL courses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1x fish PIL practical completed • 2 x fish PIL practical's and 2 x rodent practical's to be completed <p><u>Other courses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local module sessions running monthly • Final assessments completed for most of the NACWOs that took part in the assessor's course, 1 more outstanding which will be completed tomorrow. • 'People taking care of animal's' course for non-licensed fish husbandry technicians completed last week <p>Lay member enquired about how training is tracked and whether it is optional. NTCO confirmed that all training is recorded and linked to specific study needs. Training requirements are identified through the study request form, after which a training plan is developed. Once completed, the training and competency assessments are documented in the individual's training record. Training is only done, with animals when required for planned studies, not on a general or optional basis.</p> <p><u>HOLC update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Animals Materials Working Group has now finalised the Animal Materials Ethical framework, which will be published on the UKRIO website soon. The Framework is free to use, in whole or part, by any organisation, for their own policies and procedures. • The ASC is currently reviewing non-technical summaries and retrospective assessments to provide the Minister with advice for how these can be improved to promote openness and transparency. As part of their evidence gathering, the ASC would like to hear the views and experience of organisations in the animals in science sector. HOLC has circulated a survey to AWERB members. • HOLC is currently updating case studies on the University's public-facing Animals in Research webpage. Academic members are encouraged to contribute case studies from their PPL work, particularly those highlighting 3Rs contributions. 		<p>AWERB/2425/49a,b</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>11:25 (10 mins)</p>	<p>HO Facility Audit (2nd May 2025) Head of BRF provided an update on the recent HO facilities audit.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The audit focused on compliance with the PEL and ASPA Code of Practice, including environmental conditions and facility standards across all BSUs. • Interviews were conducted with NP, Head of BRF/NIO, NVS, NTCO and other relevant staff. 		<p>AWERB/2425/50</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inspector gave highly positive feedback, specifically commending several excellent initiatives, including the integration of 3Rs principles and ARRIVE guidelines into the study planning process. Final report received on 9th May, confirming no findings or actions required. <p>Head of BRF praised the team's extensive preparation and highlighted the need for continued good practice and ongoing improvement.</p>		
6.	11:35 (10 mins)	<p>Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit (<i>verbal update</i>)</p> <p>NVS gave verbal update of their activities since last meeting, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participated in the HO inspection and conducted a visit to the fish facility. ZF in nursery are now being size graded to assist decisions before moving them to the main room. Mangrove killifish have persistent white skin patches. Investigations indicated it is likely bacterial. Therefore, husbandry changes have been discussed to lower the bacterial load. Remaining guppies have been rehomed from fish facility to a zoo. Microscopy analysis of needles re-used for SC injections in dead guppies has shown no signs of blunting after multiple uses. Further evaluation using elastomer tagging in live fish is planned to confirm these findings. Advice given on management of some rodent health concerns. <p><i>To note: The analysis of needles reused as mentioned in the NVS update will help inform the needle reuse policy which currently requires a fresh needle per administration should be used for all animals unless robustly justified.</i></p>		
7.	11:45 (10 mins)	<p>Culture of Care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Culture of Care Committee met in mid-May and continues to review feedback gathered from colleagues. The team is in the process of prioritising these suggestions to identify actionable steps. Plans are underway to organise an event focused on emotional resilience, with efforts being made to invite an external speaker. The Meet the Researcher programme continues to thrive, with recent sessions involving both senior researchers and early-career staff. These meetings are fostering better mutual understanding between facility staff and researchers and are expanding in scope. A recent BRF social event was held outdoors and well attended, promoting informal team bonding. 		
8.	11:55 (10 mins)	<p>3Rs initiatives/updates</p> <p><u>Named persons meeting</u></p>		

		<p>The Named Persons meeting took place on the 23/5/25 which mainly focussed on preparing for the Home Office audit.</p> <p><u>3Rs subgroup updates</u></p> <p>Discussions remain in the scoping phase, with a primary focus on information gathering to shape a well-founded and participatory 3Rs strategy. Key actions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire development to capture views from across the institution. • Spreadsheet to document existing 3Rs will be circulated shortly. This will help build a record of 3Rs activities. • A member from the Animal-Free Research Centre of Excellence will be invited to present to the committee. <p><u>Obtaining and sharing best practice on 3Rs nationwide (other establishments/AWERBs)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing collaborations with the University of Bristol on restraint-free injection in mice and automated water scheduling in home cages. • Rehoming of approximately 2000 guppies to a zoo, and additional rehoming to Penryn. • Participation in GW4 and ASC AWERB activities also contributes to knowledge-sharing and the national 3Rs agenda. 		
9.	12:05 (20 mins)	<p>Policy reviews</p> <p><u>Policy on Rehoming and Setting Free of Protected Animals</u></p> <p>The current version remains unchanged. It covers all processes required to transfer animals to other owners/institutions, acclimatisation requirements and NVS checks before rehoming. Awaiting clarification from the HO regarding the definition of protected animal under ASPA for rehoming purposes. The policy will be updated accordingly once a response is received.</p> <p><u>Policy on Needle Reuse</u></p> <p>Also unchanged, this policy prohibits the reuse of needles due to concerns about needle blunting and animal welfare. It is encouraged to consult with NVS and NACWOs if any reuse occurs, and documentation of discussions is emphasised.</p> <p>AWERB members were asked to provide feedback by the end of next week. If changes are suggested, Head of BRF will update the policy and bring back to AWERB for review (ACTION).</p>	For review	AWERB/2425/51 AWERB/2425/52
10.	12:25 (10 mins)	<p>Consultation on future university Research Ethics Committee structures</p> <p>AWERB was updated on the Consultation on future university Research Ethics Committee structures to improve efficiency and foster subject-specific expertise. The Head of BRF updated members on the feedback provided by AWERB and key points</p>	For information	AWERB/2425/53

		<p>raised including the proposed name of the animal REC, ethical review of invertebrates and where the REC would report to</p> <p>Discussion: AWERB member asked whether committees would be able to draw on external expertise when needed. It was confirmed that cross-referencing and co-opting expertise across committees already occurs and is encouraged.</p>		
11.	12:35 <i>(5 mins)</i>	<p>Update on Chair's Action</p> <p><u>Regulated</u> 1x new PPL endorsed by chair's action</p> <p><u>Non-ASPA</u> None</p>		
12.	12:40 <i>(20 mins)</i>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>An AWERB member asked about a current PPL amendment undergoing virtual review and questions were responded.</p>		
13.	13:00	<p>End</p>		

Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 24th June. Online