

ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BOARD

A meeting of the AWERB was held at 11:00 on Wednesday 11th December 2024

Location:
online

Summary of actions

Item	Action	Due
4	Standard Condition 18 reports to include details of discussions between the licence holder, NACWO, and NVS rather than "NACWO was informed"	End Jan 2025
7	End of PPL AWERB/2425/12b1 to be made available on SharePoint as good example of form completion	Jan 2025
8	Policy for maintaining breeding colonies and Policy for maintaining protected animals to undergo some updates and bring back to next AWERB meeting for review	Feb 2025
9	HOLC to email PPL holders about new PPL Mid-Term Review Form	Dec 2024

Minutes

		Agenda item	AWERB Decision	
1.	11:00 (10 mins)	Welcome and apologies Apologies were noted. Two long-serving members are stepping down due to new roles and workload management. Appreciation was expressed for their valuable contributions. A new lay member has joined, with overlap planned for a smooth transition. Support in onboarding and familiarising them with the group's work was discussed. A new deputy chair was proposed and approved with no objections.		
2.		Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2024 Agreed as accurate record and approved for publishing.	Approved	AWERB/2425/10
3.		Matters Arising/Actions A new Estates representative has been appointed and will join the board next month. A biostatistician has been recruited, with pending start date. Efforts are underway to appoint a new member with expertise in zebrafish, with further discussions planned. All actions are either completed or on track, with no delays reported.		AWERB/2425/11
4.	11:10 (20 mins)	General updates <u>Establishment Licence updates</u> A new member has been added to the establishment licence as a NACWO. Positive feedback was received on their application from the HO. <u>Standard Condition 18 reports</u> Two Condition 18 incidents were reported, with follow-up actions taken. - A death involving a younger mouse in an aged-versus-young study. The cause is suspected to be a missed dose. A post-mortem was conducted, and follow-up checks were completed in consultation with NVS.		

- Adverse effects in mice following cell injections. Six mice showed issues potentially due to the injection formulation, leading to a reevaluation and reformulation of the inoculum. Further procedures have been paused until discussions concluded. The mice were euthanised.

Compliance issues

Plans to communicate with PIL Holders for Condition 18 incidents to include detailed documentation of discussions between the licence holder, NACWO, and NVS before submission (*ACTION*).

Updates from Named Persons Meeting

There was one meeting held since our last AWERB meeting.

Discussions covered general operations in the facility.

A key topic was ensuring animals are not brought into the facility before studies are properly planned, with a reminder to prevent this in the future.

Update from BSU Board meeting

The last board meeting covered several operational topics. Key discussions included ongoing building projects, including an annex being close to a facility, which may cause some disruption in 2025. The preparation for the HO audit and the recruitment for a biostatistician were also discussed at the meeting.

An AWERB member announced that the biostatistician will also input into the pre-review of PPL applications before they reach AWERB.

A discussion took place about the process for academics to apply for unsupported procedures via SharePoint and the HO website.

Estates

A new estates representative will join in January, bringing relevant experience and having already engaged with facility visits and operational reviews.

Efforts to control the booklice issue in the facility are ongoing, with containment achieved and additional advice being implemented.

The refurbishment project for one of the facilities has been delayed due to equipment lead times.

NTCO update

Training and Reassessments

- Schedule 1 training and competency assessments – mice, rats and fish
- Training subcutaneous administration – mice
- Training and competency assessment tunnel handling – mice. A reminder was sent regarding the correct method for handling mice with tunnel handling
- Trainer assessment, Intratracheal administration – mice
- Training Intraperitoneal training – mice
- Training Tail vein blood sampling - mice
- Intravenous admin training – mice
- Refresher training/mock assessment on a cadaver for urinary bladder cannulation and insertion of gastric feeding tube - trout

PIL courses

- PIL Practical completed for 1 x rodent 2 x fish candidate

- 2 x candidates enrolled on PIL course for January
- 2 x PIL C practical courses to be arranged

Other courses attended

- Lunch and learn/drop-in session with NVS for technicians completed
- LASA PELH meeting
- AWERB workshop 2 x candidates

Courses coming up

- ROP training courses for PPLh
- Assessors course for all NACWOs

AWERB was also updated about a recent PEL Holders meeting, highlighting new ASPA guidance from the Home Office expected in April 2025, a new audit regime with unannounced visits and themed audits, and a focus on the 3Rs in animal research.

The rollout of a local module presentation for new AWERB members explaining how ASPA is interpreted at the UoE was announced. This will be a standing item for PPL holders to attend annually and will continue into next year. The goal is to ensure all license holders and their teams are trained. Additionally, there are plans for presentations and communications regarding audit requirements and SOPs for facility managers, as well as PPL holders being made aware of audit requirements and record-keeping.

Next month, a major update will occur during the BRF User Meeting, covering topics such as training, competency, and cost allocation.

HOLC update

- The HOLC has updated the PPL PowerPoint presentation slides to include additional information. Prospective PPL holders will now have 10 minutes to do their presentation. Additional information now required is:
 - Funding
 - Experimental Groups, Sample Size, and use of Experimental Design Assistant
 - Search strategy for finding non-animal alternatives
 - Bateson's cube - Bateson's 'cube' model provides for the evaluation of proposed experiments according to three criteria: (1) quality of the research, (2) certainty of benefit, and (3) animal suffering.
- We will be having a guest speaker at the January meeting. who will be joining us to give a presentation about the Animal Materials Working Group and sharing with us the latest draft framework for discussion.
- Return of procedures are due by the internal deadline of 25th January 2025 (HO deadline 31st Jan). An Email has been sent to PPL holders to remind them and we are also providing 2 x ROP training sessions for PPL Holders which the NVS will deliver. In addition some sessions have been made with NACWOs to sense check as ROPs are submitted.

AWERB members expressed support for the use of Bateson's cube, highlighting its potential to prompt researchers to consider the value of

		their research and its impact on animals, though acknowledged that applying it may be challenging.		
5.	11:30 (10 mins)	3Rs initiatives/updates and Culture of Care • AWERB members were updated about ongoing efforts to create a formal 3Rs strategy. Head of BRF, Facility Manager/NACWO and HOLC are working to develop this strategy initially, drawing inspiration from another institution's approach, with plans to create mission and vision statements with clear, practical actions. It was also mentioned that a 3Rs subcommittee will be formed to help drive this forward. • 3Rs improvements are being made in areas such as tail handling in the rodent unit and reducing fin clipping in fish. There are also plans to collaborate with experts on genotyping training for fish. • Discussions are ongoing about staff office space to create better working conditions for everyone involved. • Head of BRF praised the collaborative effort in pushing forward the 3Rs strategy. Upcoming training opportunities were also discussed, including NC3Rs training for institutions and the integration of 3Rs into interview questions. Additionally, there will be a refinement question in the study request form. • NVS provided some examples of 3Rs taking place in the facilities. These examples are part of the NVS's visit report below. • A zebrafish user group meeting is scheduled for January to discuss policy updates and actions.		
6.	11:40 (10 mins)	Named Veterinary Surgeon's visit (verbal update) NVS gave verbal update of the November visit, including: Exeter: • Rodent health concerns were reviewed. • Zebrafish: some users have experienced long delays in genotyping of their ZF (delays for >1 year sometimes). To address this, NACWO came up with the idea of keeping ZF in the nursery until they are genotyped, which typically occurs around three months of age. This approach aims to encourage users to genotype as early as possible. Additionally, we will send out monthly ZF reports with reminders and promote more refined genotyping methods. • Guppy numbers reduced, only used for behavioural practicals – discussion on whether there may be replacements or ways to reduce numbers of animals in teaching. • Arabian killifish embryo viability now being checked at 2d rather than 9d – allowing numbers to be reduced earlier. Cornwall: • Prevalence of mortality in cherry shrimp now down to usual levels. • New temperature monitoring system of tanks now in place so if NACWOs are called there is more information about the problem (not just an alarm). Also now have back up thermostats in tanks in case sump water heaters fail • Diurnal rhythms being set for overhead tank lighting • Workload increasing with more regulated work going to start shortly – plan to bring ZF across from facility Other: • New PPLs and amendments reviewed, discussion of imports, procedural assessments undertaken, SOP reviews, discussion of process for drug ordering under ASPA		

7.	11:50 (15 mins)	End of PPL Review <u>End of PPL AWERB/2425/12a was reviewed by AWERB.</u> - NVS raised concerns regarding the replacement, asking for more detailed information on any potential replacements being developed and the team's efforts to identify alternatives. It was also suggested more detail on pain relief and clarification of how many animals were classified as mild versus moderate, especially considering the surgical procedures involved. - Lay member questioned a comment about exaggeration of numbers, wondering if this was a common practice. Other members questioned the validity of this claim, noting it conflicted with other statements about the correct calculation of animal numbers. - Discussions took place regarding the form's quality, specifically its lack of detail in the refinement section and general care. It was emphasized that terms like 'mild' versus 'moderate' effects need to be clarified with evidence. However, the actual research outputs were meaningful and impactful. It was pointed out the difference between the quality of the research and the effort put into completing the form. - AWERB member agreed with concerns about exaggerated numbers and suggested that the researcher could clarify whether overestimating the number of animals needed was intended. Confusion about the terms 'modulators' and 'regulators' in the paper was highlighted, questioning whether these terms were interchangeable or required clarification. There was consensus that this review was not ready for approval, and further revisions and clarifications were needed. <u>AWERB reviewed End of PPL Review and Home Office Retrospective Assessment AWERB/2425/12b1, b2</u> - NVS commended the researcher for the well-filled-out form, particularly praising the identification and use of replacements in their research. The quality of the presented work was highlighted. - Discussions took place regarding the 3D stereo imaging techniques. - AWERB member praised the form for its clarity, particularly in demonstrating how the 3Rs principles were applied, such as the use of non-invasive methods instead of GPS tagging. - The Chair suggested making well-completed forms available as examples for others, especially to show the level of detail required. The author of this project consented to provide this as a good example and therefore this need to be uploaded to SharePoint (<i>ACTION</i>). - AWERB members discussed the potential to share other forms in the future, particularly those from more invasive or complex studies. There was strong agreement that researcher's form was well completed, and no amendments were needed. It was unanimously approved.	AWERB/2425/ 12a for revision AWERB/2425/ 12b1, b2 endorsed	AWERB/2425/12a AWERB/2425/12b 1, b2
8.	12:05 (15 mins)	Review of Policy updates <u>Policy for maintaining breeding colonies</u>	For revision	AWERB/2425/13 AWERB/2425/14

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		- Updates included adjustments to breeding parameters, such as limits on breeding age, number of litters, and reviewing animals six months post-arrival and annually thereafter. - It was highlighted that breeding practices could vary by strain and research requirements, necessitating dialogue between researchers and facility staff for exceptions. - Discussions took place over the age cutoff for breeding replacements and the flexibility to accommodate research needs. It was discussed that any changes about the maximum age should be further evaluated, including academic citations in policy documents for transparency. - AWERB member advised on the latest version of the fish-related breeding updates, which will be integrated before finalising this policy. <u>Policy for maintaining protected animals</u> - Updates include requirements like using a study request form, conducting health reviews, ensuring adequate training, and adhering to the Code of Practice. - Discussions took place on the need for PPL holders to visit animal facilities. Emphasis was placed on ensuring animal owners (i.e. Personal Licence Holders) visit their animals regularly, as this is their legal responsibility and cannot solely rest with facility staff, who are performing husbandry on their behalf. If they are unable to do so, they should discuss this matter with the NACWO and the NVS. - Improvements in communication and practices among research teams and facility staff were acknowledged. - It was agreed to refine policy wording ('required' vs 'expected'), ensure adherence to review frequencies, and foster ongoing collaboration to address challenges. Therefore, these two policies need amendments and then to be brought back to a future meeting for approval (<i>ACTION</i>).		
9.	12:20 (10 mins)	Review of new PPL Mid-Term Review Form • HOLC presented the template form for mid-term reviews. The form was reviewed by NVS and Head of BRF. AWERB was advised that the REO will manage this process and it will be for PPLs going forward that reach their 2.5 years and will not be retrospectively applied. HOLC will inform PPL holders via email (<i>ACTION</i>). • AWERB supported the initiative but stressed being mindful of the additional burden on researchers. AWERB concluded to approve the form as presented, with plans to improve it based on feedback.	Approved	AWERB/2425/15
10.	11:30 (5 mins)	Update on Chair's Action The chair provided an update covering decisions made since the last meeting. <u>ASPA-regulated</u> • 3 x new PPL endorsed by Chair • 1 x PPL amendment endorsed by Chair <u>Non-ASPA</u> • 2 x projects involving overseas animal work have been endorsed by Chair.		

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11.	12:35	Any Other Business None.		
12.	13:00	End		

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 21st January 2024 Online