
Summary Minutes for the website: AWERB: Standing Agenda items meeting

Status: FINAL

Meeting held: Wednesday 6 November 2024 at 2.30pm

Present: 16 plus 1 in attendance and 13 apologies

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 25 September 2024 and 09 October 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

2 MATTERS ARISING/ACTION LOG

2.1 Item 4: Anonymous Survey of AWERB members – 25 September 2024 meeting

Questions were being put together.

2.2 Item 6: NC3Rs: ARRIVE guidelines – 25 September 2024 meeting

The compliance checker to automatically screen papers to see if the ARRIVE guidelines had been followed should be available via the ARRIVE guidelines website in 2025.

2.3 Item 9.1: Animal Suppliers – 25 September 2024 meeting

The list of species required for teaching had been provided to the NVS. The NVS have subsequently been in contact with a couple of animal charities to ask if they would consider providing animals that need rehoming as teaching animals. One animal charity had subsequently supplied guinea pigs, rats and mice. Rabbits were proving more problematic as they did not have any that liked being handled. These might have to be purchased as younger rabbits and acclimated to being handled from a young age.

2.4 Item 3.1: Facility questionnaire – 25 September 2024 meeting

The Third Party Animal Research Supplier questionnaire had been finalised and was currently being piloted.

2.5 Item 3.2: Teaching Animals (9 July 2024 meeting)

The proposal to build a housing area within the yard turnout area had been drafted but a costings quote was needed.

2.6 Item 2.1: NC3Rs Environmental Enrichment Workshop (25 June 2024 meeting)

Arranging this workshop for technicians would be progressed in 2025.

2.7 Item 2.3: Pest Control Contracts (6 February 2024 meeting)

There were increasing numbers of foxes and rabbits at the Hawkshead campus that were coming into the barns and creating hazards in the fields, causing welfare problems and stress for animals on site such as the sheep and horses. This would be raised again with Estates.

3 LEADERSHIP IN OPENNESS AWARD - DUE FOR RENEWAL IN 2025: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR AWERB SUBGROUP TO COLLATE OUR RESPONSE

AWERB members were asked to send expressions of interest in joining this group to the AWERB Secretary.

4 DISCUSSION TOPIC: SUGGESTIONS NEEDED FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The following topics were put forward:

- Environmental enrichment
- How to promote and encourage the sharing (by publication or otherwise) of negative and unsuccessful findings from research and research theories which have not been possible to replicate.
- Refresher sessions that focused on the functioning and processes of ASRU such as background to condition 18a and non compliance reporting and what is involved.

5 AGED MICE POLICY

A policy for the use of ageing mice and rats in research had recently been written which provided guidelines for the maintenance and use of ageing rodents for research projects within the RVC. This included not transporting rodents to the RVC that were over 15 months. Animals that were required to be aged past 15 months should be procured and transported prior to this age and must be under an active Home Office project licence that included a protocol for maintenance of these animals, even if no regulated procedures would be carried out on these animals. A query had been raised by a PPL Holder though asking why mice could not now be transported once they were older than 15 months. No published evidence (including the general Home Office transportation guidelines) had been found about the impact of transportation on aged mice and whether it was an increased risk for them. It was therefore suggested that the focus should be on the health of the mice prior to transportation rather than their actual age.

AWERB discussed and decided that the main points were:

- What were the issues with transporting rodents beyond a certain age? These should be set out.
- Was there justification to reduce the age even further that rodents could be transported?
- Having aged rodents as laboratory animals means they run the risk of developing diseases because of their age (such as chronic arthritis)
- There needed to be justification to put animals through stressful transportation
- What consideration was given to where the animals were being transported from as if overseas it would be longer transportation time?
- Should the policy distinguish having different transportation age limits depending whether the mice were being transported if a project licence was in place?

The views of the NVS and technicians who were experienced in dealing with aged rodents should be sought to see if there was a consensus. Advice should also be sought from other establishments about their approach. This would then be discussed again at a future meeting.

6 3RS

There were no 3Rs items to raise.

7 MEETINGS ATTENDED:

7.1 AWERB Hub meeting: 16 October 2024

A report on this meeting was provided. There had been a focus on providing relevant training to AWERBs. As a follow up to this, AWERB were asked what training sessions they would find useful and it was agreed that an analysis of training should be undertaken, including attending courses that the RVC provided to PPL and PIL Holders.

7.2 Establishment Licence Holders Forum meeting: 28 October 2024

There had been a series of talks from named persons at different establishments gave insight into how different institutions operated and the level of support given by Establishment Licence Holders (PELH) to their named persons.

At the RVC, the NTCOs were in regular communication with the PELH, but it was suggested that it would be useful to bring all the NACWOs together to have informal sessions with the PELH so that they could speak directly to him and be encouraged to approach him directly if necessary.

8 NVS REPORT

8.1 Camden

- Condition 18 reports: a couple of condition 18 reports had recently been submitted for foetal loss from guinea pigs that had gone into early labour. C18s were needed as foetal loss was not currently listed as a specific adverse event on the licence. An amendment was being submitted to address this.
- Condition 18 report: a report had been submitted for a mouse that had unexpectedly been found dead. It was possibly heart related.
- There had been an incident involving 8 mice in a dosing study. Four had died and four had to be euthanised shortly after the procedure. The procedure was being reviewed and the substances dosed were being tested at a much lower dose on an individual mouse to see how it responded.
- A 'keep alive' request was approved by the Home Office for a guinea pig that had an infected surgical wound. This approval was granted for 14 days, which would take it to the end of the study. The wound had not fit the specification in the PPL for treatment or humane end point, but was considered to be treatable with minimal impact to the welfare of the animal.
- There have been general issues with some mice having eye problems but these did not seem to be related. A swab has been taken though to see if there was an actual infection.
- There were 4 cages of mice that were still under NVS care. They were generally doing well.
- Ferrets: There had been a couple of relatively minor issues following recovery from wounds, so different types of treatments were being investigated.

8.2 Hawkshead

- **Dog Unit:** A male stud dog had been showing stereotypic behaviours and although a lot of time and effort was put in to help the dog, his behaviour had worsened. It was noted that the dog when purchased, had been older than the usual male stud dogs. Advice on his behaviour had been sought and because of growing concerns over the dog's welfare, it had been decided that because he would not be fit for rehoming, he would sadly have to be euthanised. This had been a difficult decision to make. One consolation was that his body would be used for a project that would benefit future dogs relating to spinal surgery. It was also a relief for the staff caring for this dog on a daily basis that this decision had now been made.

A discussion was needed though whether there should be an age limitation for future male studs that are purchased, so that they did not arrive with potential inbuilt stereotypical behaviours. A previous stud dog had been purchased from the same institution but at a much younger age, and no problems had been experienced, which indicated that this could be an age issue.

- **Genetically Modified Pigs programme:** Notification had recently been received that this programme was closing.

9 NACWO REPORT

9.1 Camden

- **A non compliance report** had been submitted following human error when 6 pregnant guinea pigs were accidentally not given their afternoon ration of food. The animals were given an immediate welfare check and were being monitored but seemed well. The technician involved had been retrained and would be closely monitored.
- **Tissue sharing/provision policy:** A process would be put together detailing what this involved and the forms that needed to be completed.

10 NTCO REPORT

10.1 Killing registers review

AWERB noted that these had previously been known as Schedule 1 registers but were now called Killing Registers, to reflect that they included additional methods to schedule 1. The registers had been formatted to fit the requirements for each site and to be easy to follow.

11 PROJECT LICENCES AMENDED BY THE HOME OFFICE

AWERB noted that two project licences have been amended by the Home Office.

12 STUDY REQUESTS APPROVED SINCE SEPTEMBER 2024

AWERB noted the 3 study requests that had been approved.

13 RETROSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT REQUIRED FOR THE HOME OFFICE

AWERB noted that the retrospective assessment for an expired project licence had been approved for submission to the Home Office.

14 MID TERM REVIEW

It was noted that a mid term review for a project licence had not yet been received despite it being originally requested in July 2024 and several reminders sent. A further reminder would be sent.

15 END OF PPL REVIEWS

An end of PPL report for an expired project licence had not yet been received.

A report for another project licence had been received but there were some queries on it which were being followed up.

16 CONDITION 18 REPORTS

AWERB noted that 3 condition 18 reports had been submitted to the Home Office.

17 ANIMALS REHOMED

AWERB noted that 4 dogs and one guinea pig have recently been rehomed.

18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 20th November. It would be a PPL review meeting.

Secretary
15 November 2024