

# Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

17/01 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held in Palmer G06 on Friday 10 February 2017 at 10.00 am.

Present:

[Redacted, Sec. 40]

Members of AWERB welcomed [Redacted, Sec. 40] to her first meeting; [Redacted, Sec. 40] was taking over from [Redacted, Sec. 40] as an independent external lay member. The Committee also thanked [Redacted, Sec. 40] for almost thirteen years of perspicacious advice to AWERB and its predecessors.

17/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 10 November 2016 were approved.

17/03 Matters Arising

*16/12 Cost of Licences*

It was reported that the cost of personal and establishment licences were met from the Academic and Governance Services budget. This would be kept under review; if costs were to increase significantly the University would need to determine where these licence costs could be met from.

*16/19 Communications informed by feedback from the UAR visit*

It was reported that [Redacted, Sec. 40] from Understanding Animal Research (UAR) had visited the University on 30 November 2016; [Redacted, Sec. 40] would meet to discuss feedback from UAR.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

*16/21 Pro-forma for mid-term and end of contract review/schedule*

It was noted that [Redacted, Sec. 40] would update the proforma in light of the format of the HO retrospective review.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

*16/24 Poultry*

At its last meeting the AWERB had agreed that permission to be sought to amend the establishment licence so that a poultry bolt gun could be used. [Redacted, Sec. 40] agreed to take his action forward.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

17/04 Re-use of farm animals/ability to move animals between licences

Members of AWERB received a tabled paper from the [Redacted, Sec. 40] setting out the fate of animals at the end of regulated procedures. The AWERB were assured by the [Redacted, Sec. 40] that there had been no breaches of procedures at the University, the topic was being brought forward as a matter for discussion and to raise awareness.

It was noted that the situation at Cedar was unusual compared with other major research establishments. At other research establishments animals were killed at the end of regulated procedures. At Cedar, however, because large animals were being used, which were expensive and difficult to source, most were kept alive with responsibility for the animal transferring from the PILh and PPLh to the named [Redacted, Sec. 40]. To add to the complexity there were two project licence holders at Cedar, [Redacted, Sec. 40]; animals used under [Redacted, Sec. 40] licence could not be used under [Redacted, Sec. 40] licence, but there was the potential to reuse animals under [Redacted, Sec. 40] licence.

It was reported that there were four options for animals kept alive:

- Moved to another licensed establishment
- Re-use
- Re-homing
- Setting free

It was noted that the University did not set animals free but regularly moved animals to other licensed establishments, and re-homed animals to other locations.

The most contentious option was that of re-use, whereby an animal was used for one procedure then subsequently re-used for another procedure. Re-use was not normally used with rodents, but was with cattle and other large animals. It was reported that the Home Office were very aware of cumulative suffering over the whole life of an animal.

Members of AWERB discussed a number of ethical issues, in particular whether it caused less suffering to re-use one animal or to undertake the procedure on a second, and what level of re-use was too much. The AWERB also discussed which procedures were mild in terms of the impact on the animal and which procedures were more extreme. In particular the AWERB noted surgical procedures that would be undertaken under general anaesthetic under [Redacted, Sec. 40] licence.

Members agreed that there were no clear answers around where the cut-off should be in terms of numbers of animals used versus severity of procedures, but it was clear that the Home Office would have view on this. It was reported that there were various methods for assessing cumulative suffering, but often the decision would come down to an individual animal level and a case by case assessment based on professional judgement. What was clear was the need for good records to be kept on the use of animals and good processes to determine whether an animal should be kept alive after each procedure and, if so, when its state of health has fully been restored to enable it to be used again.

In regard to this issues raised it was agreed that:

- The re-use of animals and cumulative suffering would be discussed with the [Redacted, Sec. 40], to ascertain whether there was further advice available;
- It would be helpful to find out what was happening at other research institutions that used large animals;
- The AWERB should revisit the approval process for re-use of animals to check that there was sufficient scrutiny/approval in the process.

#### 17/05 Health and Life Sciences Building

The AWERB received a paper from the T[Redacted, Sec. 40] in regard to the move to the new Health and Life Sciences Building.

[Redacted, Sec. 40] informed the AWERB that a request had been made as part of the sustainable planning process for additional staffing.

It was noted that the new unit would be run as a barrier unit with animals maintained at a very high health status. The animals held in the current BRU carried a number of different pathogens that would make them incompatible with the new unit. These strains and researcher access to them was essential for uninterrupted research to continue. To move

animals and research from the old BRU to the new building would need planning well ahead of time. AWERB noted the following options:

- Depopulation of existing BRU – unwanted strains in the old BRU should be removed; users should plan to end studies being conducted in the old BRU by 2019.
- Repopulation of the new unit:
  - Normal wildtype strains were available from commercial suppliers – these could go straight into the new unit as they have a highly regulated and monitored health screening programme
  - GA strains – were also available from commercial breeders, and again could go straight into the new units.
  - GA strains available from other establishments with clean, verifiable health screenings – again these could be purchased and brought into the new unit.
  - GA strains not readily available clean would need rederivation – this could be achieved through embryo transfer or the strains could be sent to a commercial concern (e.g. [Redacted, Sec. 40]) to be cleaned and returned.

The AWERB noted the implications of the various options – cost, time, impact on research, impact on the animal. It was reported that it was not clear where the cost of these options would be met from.

It was reported that there were currently 43 strains in the BRU; not all of them were unique to Reading. It was suggested that a piece of work be undertaken to ascertain which strains would need to be moved from the BRU to the new unit. Once this information was available it would be possible to discuss the best option for transferring particular strains.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

It was agreed that this matter would be brought back to a future meeting.

#### 17/06 Retrospective Assessment of Project Licence PPL70/8130

The AWERB received a retrospective assessment of Project Licence PPL70/8130 from [Redacted, Sec. 40]. This was an interim assessment requirement imposed by the Home Office.

Members of the AWERB commented that they would have liked to have seen more yes or no responses to the answers followed up with an explanation. The AWERB would have also liked to see an assessment of the degree to which objectives had been achieved supported by statements of evidence. [Redacted, Sec. 40] agreed to go back to [Redacted, Sec. 40] to ask for revisions to the document.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

17/07 The AWERB as a forum for discussion

The AWERB received and noted a publication discussing AWERB's task of providing a forum for discussion and development of ethical advice to the establishment licence holder on all matters related to animal welfare, care and use at the establishment.

17/08 Items for future meetings

It was agreed that the following items would be discussed, in each case on the basis of a written paper, at the next meeting:

- Ethical Issues in relation to the move of the BRU  
**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]
- 3Rs progress made
- Review of the Animal Research Policy

17/09 Any other business

It was suggested that the AWERB should take a view of work undertaken under DEFRA guidelines, for e.g. farming studies.

It was noted that Bath and St Andrews had published useful information on how they handled non-ASPA regulated projects. The AWERB asked [Redacted, Sec. 40] to investigate this further.

**Action:** [Redacted, Sec. 40]

17/10 Dates of meetings in the Session 2016-17

1 June 2017 at 10am – 12noon.