

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

18/01 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House on Thursday 8 February 2018 at 10.00 am.

Present:

[Redacted. Sec.40]

In attendance:

[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40] was welcomed to the meeting.

18/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 13 October 2017 were approved.

17/21 17/13 17/03 *Communications informed by feedback from the UAR visit*
AWERB had previously expressed support for the University's ambition to compete for and win an Openness Award from Understanding Animal Research (UAR) in support of wider commitments on transparency towards animal research.

AWERB now received a paper, prepared by [Redacted. Sec.40], outlining the scope of the existing Openness Awards and recommending the actions required in the coming months to enable the University to submit competitive entries in future.

It was suggested that with the construction of the new Health and Life Sciences building, and planned relocation of the Bioresources Unit to new facilities over the coming few years, there would be opportunities to undertake innovative communications activities – such as more media visits, 3D imaging, live videos, public tours etc. In the meantime the University should encourage innovative engagement and communication projects, making use of Reading's distinct research profile and unique facilities to demonstrate openness about animal research. Specifically the following recommendations were proposed:

1. Reading entry for 2018: Animal Research website
 - That AWERB encourages plans to improve the Animal Research section of the University website, taking account of best practice, and continues to innovate in line with planned improvements to the Research section over the next year.
 - This would include, for example: greater transparency on statistics; explanations about specific projects, including relevant papers, lay summaries, videos and photographs; reports and explanations of AWERB activity; and better explanations of severity and harm, including with images.
 - This could be undertaken without requirement of any additional funding beyond that which is already set aside for website improvements.
2. Reading entry for 2019: staff and student engagement project
 - That AWERB encourages a project to engage University of Reading staff and students who are not usually involved with animal research involving animals.
 - This would be organised with the combined expertise of research staff, events team, communications, and the students' union, working to create an event over one day or a series of days, during the 2018-19 academic year.
 - Timing could be co-ordinated with existing festivals or events, such as AHRC Being Human festival (in November 2018) or British Science Week (March 2019).
 - Activities might include public debates over ethics; showcases of Reading research involving animals; tours of

farm or BRU facilities; coordination of communications on staff and student websites and via social media.

- This would respond directly to AWERB's previous comments that most Reading staff and students are "completely unaware to the types of animal research undertaken by the University".
 - This was likely to require specific additional funding, likely from Research Endowment Trust Fund or University Strategic Fund.
3. To encourage individual participation from 2019 and beyond
- That AWERB encourages all staff involved with animal research to submit proposals, via the University Research Committee, for funding to support public engagement activities to promote openness in research – including animal research.
 - This could include work to highlight and promote 3Rs, public visits, school engagement, media etc.
 - This could be managed with existing RETF funding assessments, made via [Redacted. Sec.40] and with the support of relevant [Redacted. Sec.40].
 - This could be encouraged with the creation of new category within the existing Research Engagement and Impact Awards, specifically for any public engagement activities by Reading staff that encourage openness on animal research, research ethics, open data etc.
 - This was likely to lead to funding implications, both for activities and to support the research engagement awards, and would therefore require support of University Research Committee.

AWERB was supportive of the approach outlined, for its part, but noted that recommendations 2 and 3 would require discussion elsewhere.

In regard to the first proposal members of AWERB suggested that the University needed to ensure that summaries of project work were suitable for lay audiences. It was noted that the non-technical summaries used in project licences were generally not suitable for lay audiences. [Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that the Home Office were looking to revise the format of the applications so that in future the non-technical statement was at the beginning of the document. It was agreed that a small group would meet outside of the meeting to agree a way forward for drafting the project summaries for the web.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

It was suggested that in the future staff should be given help at the outset to draft non-technical statements that were suitable for lay audiences.

17/21 17/13 1703 Severity Data

It was agreed that data on client numbers should also be included in the data published along with a clear explanation of what was included.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

17/21 17/13 17/03 Poultry Gun

It was reported that use of a poultry gun did not need to be included on the institutions licence but could be added on project licences if required in the future.

17/21 17/13 17/09 Work undertaken on non-APSA regulated projects

AWERB received and noted a tabled paper on animals held not under the authority of A(SP)A.

It was reported that the responsibilities of the [Redacted. Sec.40], and the interests of the [Redacted. Sec.40], extended to the care and welfare of those animals held at licenced establishments, but not under the authority of the Act.

Whilst no concerns had been expressed concerning the welfare of these animals AWERB had requested further information to ensure that responsibilities were being met.

AWERB noted the number of animals held/used by species, the purpose for which these animals were held, their locations, the staff who were responsible for these animals care, and forecast trend in animal use.

It was agreed that the data gathered should be published along with a narrative to explain the difference between regulated and non-regulated work.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

It was agreed that an email would also be sent to [Redacted. Sec.40] and to RUSU to enquire as to whether any animals were used for non-research purposes (for e.g. shows, performances, petting zoos) and to enquire into approval routes for such events.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

18/04 Health and Life Sciences Building

[Redacted. Sec.40] provided an updated report to AWERB in relation to welfare and ethical issues in the BRU and the move to the new Health and Life Sciences Building.

It was reported that:

- The Bioresource Unit Implementation Group (BRUIG) was working with the project team to further define and plan the commissioning and validation activities that would be required prior to Home Office approval. High-level equipment costs had been included in the project budget; work would continue to

ensure that specifications for equipment including autoclaves and cage washers were met.

- The BRUIG has worked with project holders and a contact at the Medical Research Council (MRC), Harwell Institute, to produce a preliminary move programme for each research project that was likely to be in place at the time the new BRU opens.
- A new Technical Services post ([Redacted. Sec.40] had been approved as part of the 5-year planning round. Interviews were being held in February with a view to appointing to this post in March.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] needed to plan and manage work so that stocks were maintained to levels that enabled research but that no surplus remained. A rigid adherence to the official handover date was essential to avoid wastage of animals. The [Redacted. Sec.40] had raised the potential implication on project licences as animal numbers might increase to allow for validation of research between the new and the old facilities.
- Careful consideration would need to be given to the fate of animals at the end of the programme of work in the old BRU. This would be discussed further with the AMS BRU user group.

In regard to the potential increase in numbers of animals required for validation it was agreed that a standard form of wording should be agreed in order to vary the project licences.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40] was encouraged to set deadlines, as soon as was reasonably practicable, for populating the new unit and running down the BRU.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

It was noted that the issue of who would meet the costs for rederivation or buying new sources still needed to be addressed.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

18/05 Progress on the 3Rs

It was reported that a meeting was still to be arranged; a report would be submitted to the next meeting.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

18/06 Pro-forma for mid-term and end of contract review

AWERB received and noted three mid-term reviews using the new proforma. A number of minor suggestions were made for the format of the document in particular a clearer explanation in regard to the 'number of additional animals/number of animals used' in table 3 versus the number of procedures undertaken.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

It was suggested that it would be helpful to gather information from the mid-term reviews on lessons learnt for the 3Rs.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

In regard to the specific reviews it was noted that:

[Redacted. Sec.40] –

- [Redacted. Sec.43].
- [Redacted. Sec.43]
- [Redacted. Sec.40] anticipated to use less animals than the 500 quoted.
- AWERB was content with the submission. It was expected that if the photon microscopy facility was not purchased that there would be a reduction in the number of animals used.

[Redacted. Sec.40] –

- [Redacted. Sec.40] had taken on the licence from [Redacted. Sec.40].
- The review suggested that more animals would be used than detailed in the project licence. It was noted that the ‘animals used to date’ referred to individual procedures rather than number of animals (the pro-forma would be updated to be made clearer). It was noted that the project was likely to exceed the number of animals estimated in the licence for cows, but would not for other species. An amendment to the project licence would be sought for changes to the number of cows.
- The llama work had proved successful with external sponsors to the extent that additional llamas had been purchased; the University now had 12 llamas, several of which were rescue animals. The University had worked closely with the Llama Society when it purchased the animals. It was noted that there was a limit of three procedures per year per animal.
- Procedures had been limited as far possible. Lessons had been learnt in regard to refining procedures.
- It was important to remember the environment that animals were being kept in including housing, husbandry, and farm management, as the vast majority of the time the animals were not involved in any studies.

18/07 Communications

The following communications were received and noted:

- a) Home Office (ASRU Operational Newsletter 5)
- b) Home Office (ELH Newsletter December 2017)
- c) RSPCA October 2017 Newsletter

18/08 Any other business

It was noted that fish tanks had now been installed in the BRU for Zebra Fish. AWERB agreed that the Establishment Licence would need to be amended accordingly and that the number of fish used should be reported. There was some discussion in regard to the fact that the use of fish would not contribute to a reduction or refinement, but that they were classed as a lower sentient animal.

18/09 Dates of meetings in the Session 2017-18

Tuesday 22 May 2018 at 10.00 am