

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

22/1 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Monday 7 February 2022 at 10.00 am.

Present: [Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
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[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

In attendance: [Redacted. Sec.40] (for Minute 22/4 only)

Apologies were received from [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40].

22/2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 30 September 2021 were approved as a correct record.

22/3 Matters Arising

21/23 Animals in Science – Culture of Care

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported on behalf of [Redacted. Sec.40] who had attended the session at Pirbright, key points were:

- The discussion had focussed on process and ensuring compliance; [Redacted. Sec.40] used quite detailed Study Request forms

- Their AWERB was open to all colleagues
- Regular pre/post study meetings were held
- Meetings were held to address emotions and welfare
- The attendees received a presentation from UAR on public perceptions – this suggested that there was likely to be less opposition from the public. The presentation also highlighted the importance of showing care for animals and talking about both harms/benefits
- It was suggested that having a session to address how potential questions would be answered would be helpful
- NC3Rs had spoken on evaluating environmental enrichment. A tool was available on their website
- NC3Rs had also spoken about animal free antibody production

21/23 Input around animal free innovations

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported that at her institutions discussions had taken place to ascertain what expertise was available in tissue engineering and biomaterials fields as a means of animal free innovations. It was suggested that similar discussions could take at Reading to see how colleagues could feed into the replacement agenda; [Redacted. Sec.40] agreed to discuss this further with [Redacted. Sec.40].

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

The AWERB noted that being proactive in looking for animal free innovations/replacements was a key part of Leadership in Openness.

21/25 Mid-Term Review

It was noted that the pro-forma had been updated.

The meeting to discuss facilities permissions for the piggery had not yet taken place.

21/27 Animal Research Policy

The AWERB received and approved an updated version of the Animal Research Policy.

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported that data and the non-technical summaries had been passed to Communications.

22/4 Mid-Term Review

The Board received a presentation from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of her current Project Licence – Neural correlates of vitamin B supplementation. [Redacted. Sec.40] outlined the study and the following points were noted:

- The study had four objectives
 - Looking at the effect of a Vitamin B supplement on neural activity
 - Looking at the effect of a Vitamin B supplement on cognitive behaviour
 - Modelling neural activity
 - Understanding mechanisms

- The focus was on Vitamin B6, B9 (Folic Acid), B12. B6 was important for the synthesis of many neurotransmitters (GABA, Serotonin, dopamine, noradrenalin, histamines); Folate was intimately linked to the synthesis of neurotransmitters (serotonin, norepinephrine, dopamine); B12 acted as a cofactor in synthesis of neurotransmitters (serotonin, dopamine).
- A study published two years ago had shown that supplemental Vitamin B12 enhanced the neural responses to sensory stimulation in the barrel cortex of healthy rats but does not affect spontaneous neural activity.
- Work had started in June 2019. [Redacted. Sec.40] highlight progress across the project including where delays had occurred as a result of various lockdowns. The B6 and B12 experiments had been completed in December 2021.
- The Folic Acid study had taken 8 weeks. The first week of the study was habituation followed by cognitive tests on week two. Weeks three to six involved four weeks of feeding 20x (less than the PPL max of 100) the recommended daily amount (RDA), followed by cognitive tests week seven, and surgery week eight. The cognitive tests included: open field, novel object recognition, T-maze, and walking beam. The preliminary findings were: cognitive tests – no significant difference between groups on all assessments; Neural recordings – significantly higher spiking activity for the FA group and significantly lower sensory evoked activity for the FA group.
- The Vitamin B6 study had taken 7 weeks. The first week of the study was habituation followed by cognitive tests on week two. Weeks three to five involved three weeks of feeding 40x (less than the PPL max of 100) the recommended daily amount (RDA), followed by cognitive tests week six, and surgery week seven. The cognitive tests included: open field and rotarod. The preliminary findings were being analysed.
- The Vitamin B12 study had taken 10 weeks. The first week of the study was habituation followed by cognitive tests on weeks two to four. Weeks five and six involved 80x (less than the PPL max of 200) the recommended daily amount (RDA), followed by cognitive tests weeks seven to nine, and surgery week ten. The cognitive tests included: a texture discrimination test via a novel object recognition task. Both in vivo and in vitro studies were conducted using the same rat. The preliminary findings were: the design of the texture discrimination task using sandpapers had been demonstrated to work; in vivo – there was a significantly higher sensory evoked activity for the B12 group but no difference in vitro
- The next phase of study was a longitudinal study of Vitamin B12 supplementation.

AWERB thanked [Redacted. Sec.40] for the presentation.

22/5 UAR Leaders in Openness Scheme

The AWERB received the feedback on the Leaders in Openness Award. In particular it was noted that:

- The feedback had suggested using a broader range of animals. Pictures of the new BRU had been taken and consideration would be given to a virtual tour.
- Consideration should be given to actively training staff on media commentary/engagement. UAR could offer a bespoke session on this.
- In regard to public engagement it was noted that [Redacted. Sec.40] had been invited to contribute to the Royal Society Summer Exhibition this summer.

In regard to comments raised around the use of language and being too technical, [Redacted. Sec.40] offered to help further with this.

22/6 Report from Technical Services

It was noted that:

- Acoustic testing had been undertaken on the boiler alarm which confirmed that it was within an acceptable level.
- The vast majority of colleagues had now been inducted to the new unit.
- The deep clean had taken place in January and results were awaited on the bioindicator tests. Once acceptable results were received animals could be moved in.
- It was confirmed that the process to move sentinel animals could take place within a couple of weeks.
- Technical Services were working with researchers to finalise the timing of the reactivations process with Harwell.
- There were very few animals in the old BRU; those studies still housed in that facility were due to be completed by Easter.

22/7 Home Office ASRU Compliance Audit

The AWERB noted that all PEL/PPL/PIL colleagues had been contacted in regard to changes in how all those who hold Home Office establishment, project or personal licences were complying with the relevant rules. Previously, this was achieved by episodic unannounced inspections by the University's dedicated [Redacted. Sec.40]. [Redacted. Sec.40] were no longer assigned/dedicated to individual establishments and the task of assessing compliance fell to dedicated audit teams.

The ASRU audit teams had already started on their programme of 'Full System' audits. Whilst very few audits had been completed the University had been given a very clear steer as to how the audit would be structured and where it would focus through the standard conditions for personal, project and establishment licences.

It was noted that [Redacted. Sec.40] had circulated the standards to relevant colleagues who had responded using a traffic light system on the individual elements. These responses had been followed up by further discussions with the NVSs.

It was suggested that a workshop be used to bring together licence holders to talk through the steps. It was suggested that groups would be given a number of conditions and would be asked to outline what the process was and how it could be evidenced/proved with documentary evidence. AWERB was supportive of this approach and urged that it be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40]

22/8 Communications

The AWERB noted that a meeting had been held between Communications and research teams involved in the recent Guardian interview. It was noted that whilst the video had been positively received, practical issues around production and other pressures had been challenging. A lessons learnt meeting had been held and it had been suggested that a sign-off process be put in place in future. The AWERB were supportive of the approach that colleagues should be briefed in advance.

The [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that the ASPA Act prevented filming animal procedures for live broadcast but did not stop the taking of pictures/videos for later use. Procedures could not be undertaken for the purpose of filming/ photography. For animals involved in continued procedures they would remain under the supervision of the [Redacted. Sec.40] in between project use; filming between projects was no different to filming at any other point.

The AWERB received and noted a guide to animal protests produced by [Redacted. Sec.40]. [Redacted. Sec.40] reported that there were local rules in place for colleagues working in the BRU which should be updated to include sections on security, protests (in person or via social media).

22/9 Dates of meetings in the Session 2021-22

Thursday 12 May 2022 at 10.00 am