

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

24/10 A hybrid meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via Teams on Thursday 9 May 2024 at 10.00 am.

Present:



NACWO = Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer

NVS = Named Veterinary Surgeon

Apologies were received from [redacted] and [redacted].

The AWERB welcomed [redacted] to her first meeting as NVS.

24/11 Minutes of the last meeting

The Minutes of the last meeting held on 5 February 2024 were approved as a correct record.

24/12 Matters Arising

24/03 Compliance with Establishment Licence (PEL) Standard Conditions – categorisation

It was noted that the plan had been categorised as red (problem/needed significant work), amber (ok), green (progressing well). There were no reds to note at present; as and when any arose these would be referred to the Chair.

24/05 3Rs Strategy Update – Saretius, interview questions

It was noted that [REDACTED] had been invited to the 3Rs seminars. Discussions were in hand in regard to interview questions.

All other matters arising were covered below.

24/13 Mid Term Review

The AWERB received a presentation from [REDACTED] in respect of the current project licence for: The regulation of platelet function as a central mechanism for the control of cardiovascular function and development.

[REDACTED] outlined to the AWERB the main focus of the work on this particular project licence on platelet biology. Studies had been ongoing for a number of years using animal models. This work was now translating into patients, so in general the move was towards using fewer animals. Colleagues had been keen to explore translational pathways away from the use of animals and in particular mathematical and other modelling. The work of [REDACTED] group was being shared with other colleagues within the School of Biological Sciences who used animals in their research.

The following points and questions were noted:

- How were opportunities for replacement identified?
There was no single point, it was important to question why animals needed to be used for particular procedures, was it simply down to traditional methods? For e.g. using blood samples did not reflect the situation *in vivo* in which case it was better to develop a technique that could mimic platelets *in vivo*.
- Mathematical modelling had allowed new approaches to answering difficult questions/complex pathways. The motivation behind the models were multiple: could we predict/develop tools to save parts of an experiment; could the developments be used as diagnostic tools; could the models allow for work that might be considered not ethical in real life or far too complex to undertake.
- Work to develop modelling, supporting the 3Rs, was becoming a big topic in this field. [REDACTED] was sharing his new approaches nationally with colleagues, particularly in the UK.
- There was mention in the review of difficulties with establishing mouse colonies
[REDACTED] clarified that this was in relation to logistical concerns in relation to the move to the new BRU, particularly during the pandemic.
- Colleagues were complementary around [REDACTED] approach to the 3Rs. Could this be disseminated further across the institution including Saretius, particularly how to embed good practice? [REDACTED] agreed to give this further thought as part of the work of the 3Rs group.

Action: [REDACTED]

- Work on the 3Rs could also be shared with postdocs and PhD students.
- Funders of [REDACTED] ([REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED]) were content with the use of new approaches and modelling. For companies such as [REDACTED] involved in pre-clinical testing there were probably more concerns from funders and requirements to use more established methods.

AWERB thanked [REDACTED] for the presentation.

24/14 Compliance with Establishment Licence (PEL) Standard Conditions

It was noted that since the last meeting ongoing work included:

- Reminders around the performance of names persons as part of the PDR process
- Cover for [REDACTED] as NVS at the Farm – [REDACTED] would provide business continuity
- Discussions around business continuity plans for the farm – meetings would be held with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

24/15 3Rs Strategy Update

The AWERB received a verbal update on the work of the 3Rs group. As part of the task of reviewing and ensuring compliance with the Standard Conditions of the Establishment Licence was the work to ensure promotion and adoption of the 3Rs 'best practices'.

It was noted that the following activity had taken place since the last meeting:

- Work on identifying the use of non-procedural animals not under licence – a non ASPA form had been developed and returns were being collated
- 3Rs seminars had been warmly received. Attendance was good, with partners at other institutions invited e.g. [REDACTED]. The flyers for the events would be added to the animal research webpages.

24/16 Zebrafish Management Plan

The AWERB received a management plan in response to recommendations from the [REDACTED] and Section 18 Report.

The plan included guidance on improving the facility and breeding success rate:

- Reducing water exchange from 25% to 15% over a week
- All formula feed was stored in the fridge in light proof containers
- Reduce set pH from 7.5 to 6.8
- Breed Wild Type with reduction in stock density from 40 per tank to 20 per tank in rearing system
- Testing water parameters directly from rearing tanks
- Record mortality rates every other day using a grid for more accurate counting
- Relocate rearing tanks to areas of less light exposure
- On successful rearing of WT larvae past 28 days, breeding of Casper fish to take place. On successful rearing of Casper larvae past 28 days, breeding of CD41 to take place

No response had been received from the Home Office as yet.

24/17 Report from Technical Services

The AWERB received an update from the BRU, in particular it was noted that:

- Estates would replace the steam boilers in the building with electric steam generators. It was unknown as yet what the impact would be on the BRU, but a level of noise was expected

- A meeting was being held by Oxford University on the effectiveness of AWERBs – details would be shared with colleagues
- A symposium was being planned for 17 October 2024 including: a talk from UAR on openness; a session on compassion fatigue; 3Hs initiative; practical ways to improve wellbeing. Attendance of around 80-100 was expected

AWERB agreed that an update from the Farm would be added to the next agenda.

24/18 Definition of Culture of Care/Compassion Fatigue

It was noted that an anonymous survey was being undertaken on culture of care. Discussions were being held with [REDACTED] on what they did on this activity and how they helped their teams. [REDACTED] also provided an online course that might be helpful for colleagues.

It would be important to record on the animal research webpages what support was provided to colleagues.

24/19 Rehoming ASPA Advice

The AWERB received the ASRU advice note 03/15 rehoming and setting free decision tree.

It was noted that some cattle were technically rehomed at the end of studies at CEDAR, e.g. following nutritional studies; the NVS examined the animal, and it was returned to the herd. As the herd was on the Establishment Licence they were still owned by the University who continued management. Occasionally calves were rehomed.

Technically sending sentinel animals to screening labs was also considered rehoming.

[REDACTED] agreed to review the flowchart to ensure that the University was complying with the conditions of rehoming.

Action: [REDACTED]

24/20 ASRU Annual Return

The AWERB received the ASRU Annual Return. It was noted that as at 31 January 2024, 15 returns had been made to ASRU – 11 active, 4 inactive. The AWERB noted that the number of regulatory procedures had increased; it would be important to provide a narrative for the increase including an explanation around severity levels.

Action: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

24/21 Communications Strategy

The AWERB noted that work was in hand to review the communications strategy with a focus on public engagement. It would be important for the centenary year in 2026 to showcase how the University's research had developed over time; the impact of the 3Rs should be included.

24/22 Items for future meetings

The AWERB were asked to submit any items for future meetings to the Secretary.

24/23 Dates of meetings in the Session 2024-25

Wednesday 18 September 2024 at 10.00 am

Monday 3 February 2025 at 10.00 am

Thursday 8 May 2025 at 10.00 am