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## University Court

### Minutes of Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee

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A meeting of the Committee was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025.

Present: The Convener, the Director of Biological Services (DBS, and acting named training and competency officer and acting named information officer), the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS), a Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers (NACWO), an independent member, one scientist Personal Licence (PIL) holder, four Project Licence (PPL) holders (also PIL holders), one scientist and three lay members.

Apologies: Six members had sent apologies.

#### 1 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The last meeting was held on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025, and the Minutes were approved.

#### 2 MATTERS ARISING

- a. **Establishment Licence Holder.** The current establishment licence holder is on sickness absence with no contingency in place due to the recent changes in senior management. The interim University Secretary has stepped up to this responsibility.
- b. **Proposal to outsource mouse breeding.** The committee requested additional information to be able to review fully. Two researchers have already outsourced some activities to a commercial supplier and there is risk of losing the facility if occupancy rate lowers and costs continue to rise. The scientific members of the committee discussed the drivers behind this proposal and the impact of the cost savings and ability to remain competitive for funding. Two members of the committee are ex-home office inspectors and shared their concerns about the impact on welfare (also see NVS report), overbreeding, expected losses and impact on science. One researcher flagged not only that there had been welfare concerns with a GA line that they source from a commercial supplier, but also that the breeding practices at the supplier make identifying parentage of individual animals impossible and this has made tracing possible genetic issues impossible. The convenor will summarise the discussion and send a letter to senior management to be considered alongside the procurement exercise.
- c. **Impact of the financial crisis and associated change on Technicians.** The NACWO raised concerns that animal care and welfare technicians are significantly more affected by the ongoing stress of the unknowns. There are increasing errors in daily tasks and staff are experiencing compassion fatigue. The technicians are supported and have a safe space to raise issues that are actioned.
- d. **New project licence application.** A project licence holder responded to committee comments raised in relation to severity assessment and humane endpoints. The committee will review and approve the final text before submitting to the Home Office.
- e. **PETA request on sepsis research.** The university received a request from PETA to state that it will not support research into sepsis. The committee advise the ELH that we do not conduct research or use the described models for sepsis defined as “multi-organ failure” but we cannot state that we will never conduct research into sepsis.
- f. **Institutional 3Rs strategy.** The DBS and NVS updated on progress to date. Following the 3Rs meeting held in Dundee in April, the workshop was repeated and expanded at the recent congress of the Federation of European laboratory animals in science associations (FELASA) with similar results. We now plan to share a short survey with researchers in Dundee to identify the starting point to our strategy.

- g. **Update from the Scottish AWERB-Hub meeting.** Dundee hosted this meeting and the representative from the Animals in Science Committee member took a tour of the facility. The meeting discussed several issues, but the focus was on security and the increasing activist activity in the UK. The committee advises the ELH to generate a security plan with the local police and invite local councillors and members of the Scottish parliament to visit to improve transparency in what we do in Dundee.
- h. **Project licence retrospective review (RR).** A project licence holder submitted their RR 4 years into their licence. No animals have been used to date due to issues with the generation of the genetically altered mouse at a commercial supplier. The applicant has been advised to revoke the licence early.

### 3 REPORTS FROM THE NVS AND NACWO ON ANIMAL WELFARE

[Standing agenda item]

The NACWO and NVS reported as follows since the last meeting:

- There has been one ongoing issue with a GA line that had transport induced stress responses. The transport issue seems to have resolved, however, upon ageing the phenotype has returned with 18% mice being humanely culled over the course of April-May. A newly derived colony is being used with no reported adverse effects to date. This colony will continue to be closely monitored.

**NVS comments on outsourcing (item 2b).** The comments provided here relate to advice to committee on animal welfare in line with the duties of the NVS and do not consider costs.

- From a welfare perspective outsourcing breeding to a commercial supplier appears to be a backward step from the advances made in Dundee (which have been internationally recognised) in terms of animal handling, sentinel free bedding, move to non-invasive re-biopsy method, caging enrichment and staff training.
- None of the tenders offer caging conditions that meet the current norm in Dundee (all offer less enrichment).
- Only the tender at the highest cost approaches our current housing norms. The quality score given by the NVS had an inverse relationship to the cost (i.e. higher quality cost more).
- Whilst all will meet the legal minimal, caging densities are higher in all tenders, some of them significantly so (particularly where trio breeding is proposed) – this is a downgrade compared to the current Dundee standards
- There are welfare costs related to transport due to stress (expected time for transport of animals between 14 and 36 hours depending on source) that are not balanced by reduced wastage of the genetically altered lines involved, as “spare” animals are unlikely to be available to other groups/ establishments. This contrasts with wild type animals sourced from commercial breeders where animal use can be maximised by use across many establishments
- Two of the tenders indicate that they will use diets that are autoclaved rather than irradiated (autoclaved diet is hard on teeth compared to the softer irradiated diet) and the companies have indicated that the format of diet will not be changed for us. Dundee swapped to irradiated diet as this appears to better support weanlings.
- Moving the animals to any of the tendering facilities has the potential to alter research outcomes through changes in housing, husbandry routines and altered microbiota.
- All tenders involve caging animals in different housing to the caging at Dundee.
- The diet composition of all the standard diets listed by tendering companies differs to that used in Dundee. Two of the tenders include a diet in a different format which may also impact on research.
- There is a higher risk of health breakdown at commercial suppliers compared to the University's facilities due to the higher number of imports of live animals at the suppliers. If a health

breakdown occurs, clean-up is not guaranteed (rederivation is not offered for certain organisms other than at Dundee's expense). This could result in animals that do not meet the health status of the Dundee unit.

- The risk of impacts from delays in animals arriving due adverse weather or anti-vivisectionist activities are increased with increased volume of transport.
- There is an increase in risk to the University's reputation as there is potentially a reduced level of husbandry and transport related welfare and there is limited control on how animals are kept and the University could be tainted by any expose.
- It should also be noted that once animals are moved to a different provider it will be extremely difficult to then change the provider if costs increase – so the initial decision is critical.
- From a welfare perspective, the NVS does not support outsourcing breeding. If the University feels it is necessary due to other considerations, the NVS's strong recommendation is that there is a visit to the proposed provider for due diligence.

#### **4 REPORT FROM THE UVS ON COMPLIANCE**

[Standing agenda item]

The UVS provided a comprehensive report for the committee.

- There were no cases of non-compliance since the last meeting.
- There were two near misses. Systems have been revised to prevent recurrence.
- There were three Standard Condition 18 reports submitted to the Home Office since the last meeting. Internal reviews have been conducted with remedial actions agreed for all cases. The Home Office have indicated that they will not respond to SC18 reports unless they identify non-compliance, so no response is expected.

#### **5 REPORT FROM THE TRAINING COORDINATOR**

[standing agenda item]

Training is proceeding as standard.

- DOPs assessments are being updated to better meet staff and researcher requirements.
- 3 new PIL A/B theory and one completed the practical handling assessment.
- Annual refresher CPD for licensees has been scheduled for October and November. Attendance is mandatory but if a licensee is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances, they will be asked to complete Module 25 Project evaluator on ETPLAS as a refresher.
- The committee were asked to approve a change to current mandatory training. At present, it is mandatory for all new starts to complete Research Animal Training (RAT) modules 5 (recognition of pain suffering and distress) and 6 (humane methods of killing) before they can receive an induction into the unit. We wish to include an additional module - 4 (animal care, health and management) - maintain the requirement for 5 (recognition of pain suffering and distress) and change to the new KD module which cover the basics of humane methods of killing. The modules are species specific and provide more relevant content. The committee approved this change.

#### **6 REPORT FROM THE NIO ON 3Rs**

[standing agenda item]

A summary of the progress from the 3Rs Champions group, 3Rs activities, web page updates and public engagement activities was presented to the committee.

- Galleria Mellonella is a wax moth being used as a **replacement** for animals. Although use is not regulated under ASPA, the researcher involved has agreed to record numbers used and treat the organisms ethically during their studies.
- **Reductions** in the numbers of animals used during research has been possible by using ex breeder stocks for tissue collections.
- Following on from the **refinements** made to use voluntary administration methods either as an alternative to oral gavage or positive reinforcement training techniques more research groups are engaging. In addition, the videos showing the mice drinking condensed milk unrestrained were shared by the European Commission lead on animal research, with the contact points for the EU Member states and other stakeholders to demonstrate the refinements that can be made.
- **3Rs Day, April 2025.** This was a full day event held in person with lunch sponsored by Transnetyx. Biological Services staff were in attendance, but researcher attendance was lower than expected.
- **Psychological Safety and the Culture of Care Workshop.** NVS held a workshop at the Irish National Committee for The Protection of Animals Training Day.
- **IACLAM Talk, June 2025. NVS funded by LAVA.** Training Module for Designated Veterinarians.
- **FELASA Conference , June 2025 NVS funded by LAVA, NIO funded by Transnetyx.** NVS chaired 1 poster session, held 2 workshops on building an institutional **3Rs** strategy, and presented 2 talks (on **refinements** and **ethical** consideration of projects throughout their life) and NIO presented 2 posters (on **refinements** and **reduction**).
- **Compassion Fatigue and Psychological Safety, July 2025.** Presentation/ Discussion – Biological Services Staff
- **Scottish Technical Conference, June 2025 (funded by the UoD Technician Commitment).** 2 members of the 3Rs Champions Group presented the two posters '3Rs Champions Team: Empowering Animal Technicians' (championing **refinements**) and 'Reimagining the Role of the Colony Technician' (championing **reduction** and **refinement** in breeding practices). This was planned as an Openness activity as the audience in attendance was not solely technicians working in the in vivo field, but technicians and managers from varied technical positions across numerous Scottish Universities and Institutes. There were many questions on the topics presented in both posters and it was a very positive experience. The '3Rs Champions Team: Empowering Animal Technicians' won second prize in the poster competition.
- **Outreach Booklet and Animation.** In collaboration with public outreach team following on from the NC3Rs funding, a medical art student, produced a booklet which uses images taken by staff within our units which will be given to participants attending **Animals in Research outreach** activities. An animation based on the booklet is currently in the final stages of production.

## 7 REPORT FROM THE DBS ON LICENSING MATTERS

[standing agenda item]

A comprehensive review of progress of each application reviewed by the committee and submitted to the Home Office since the last meeting was discussed.

## 8 AOCB

- i. Welcome to a new committee scientific member.
- j. Thanks to committee members leaving the committee or university.
- k. Call to committee members to suggest replacement scientists and lay members.
- l. Special congratulations to the independent member on the committee for being recognised by FELASA for their work on animal welfare.

## 9 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2025.

22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026

23<sup>rd</sup> April 2026

2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026

1<sup>st</sup> October 2026

## 10 ACTION LOG

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Update</b>
04/07/2024 Item 6 And 23/01/25 Item 6	Replacements. To compile a list of non-animal methods and replacements in the University with the aim to share case studies on the web page	NIO/DBS/ Scientists	Ongoing
31/10/24 Item 3a	To arrange tours of the Facility for committee members who have not yet done so	DBS	Awaiting uptake
3/7/25 Item 2b	To provide more information to the committee to be able to comment	DBS	Complete 4/7/25
3/7/25 Item 2b	Write a letter for circulation to UEG, ELH, Deans of SLS and SMed	Convenor	Sent to committee for approval 4/7/25 Complete