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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 4th July 2024.

Present: The Convener, the Director of Biological Services (DBS), the establishment licence holder, the University Veterinary Surgeon (UVS, online), a Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer (NACWO), the named training and competency officer (NTCO), the Named Information Officer (NIO), the student representative, one Personal Licence (PIL) holder, two Project Licence (PPL) holders, one scientist and two lay members.

Apologies: Eight members had sent apologies.

#### 1 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The last meeting was held on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and the minutes were approved.

#### 2 MATTERS ARISING

- a. **Secondary Availability Process.** The DBS shared the recent application to request secondary availability at another establishment, a process new to the committee. The committee agreed that the recent application process was clear and efficient and should be repeated should such a request be submitted again.
- b. **ASRU Standard Condition 18.** The DBS shared an email sent from ASRU on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024 acknowledging receipt of any SC18 reports submitted prior to December 2023 and stating that no further action will be taken in relation to these reports at this time. The committee were frustrated by this response but acknowledge that since the beginning of 2024, the processes and response to submitted SC18 reports has been in a relatively timely manner.
- c. **RSPCA meeting report.** The Convenor attended online an RSPCA meeting held at the University of Oxford in June, on the subject of 'Maximising the effectiveness of your AWERB'. A paper was shared summarising the meeting content. The conclusions were that there are no two AWERB committees alike, and that induction/training is important, particularly for new Lay members, but we are confident that we are meeting the expectations of an AWERB.
- d. **Guidance on writing a Non-Technical Summary.** The NIO shared a paper providing guidance for project licence holders on how to complete their Non-Technical Summaries. We will trial this document and update as required. We will also contact the Public Engagement team to discuss the content and if this can be improved to improve the scientific communications.
- e. **AWERB Induction Pack.** The NIO shared a new Induction Pack for new and well as a refresher for current members. This was well received by the committee and the final version will be circulated.

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

[Standing agenda item]

The UVS reported as follows:

**Ongoing issues with a GA line (continuation from 25<sup>th</sup> April 2024 Meeting Minutes Point 4).** There have been two shipments of these animals since the last AWERB meeting in April (deliveries on 28<sup>th</sup> May and 1<sup>st</sup> July). As previously, some of these animals became ill on or within a few days of arrival.

28<sup>th</sup> May. All animals were OK on arrival, although several had “pinched” faces. Two animals were culled on day of arrival, due to non-responsive behaviour and drop in body temperature (surface temp 23.6C and 25.2C). Two animals were culled 48 hours later. They appeared “thinner” at 24 hours and went downhill over the second night, showing clear abdominal pain behaviours.

1<sup>st</sup> July. Animals were OK on arrival but one was ill within 30 minutes of arrival and a second within another 2 hours. Both went downhill and were culled that afternoon. Two further animals were “a bit slow” on the day of arrival. They went downhill overnight and were culled on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.

We (DBS, NVS, PPL holder and PIL holder) met with the supplying establishment on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and the agreements were:

- SC18 to be prepared and sent to Home Office. *Completed, submitted and returned as closed, having commented licence might need amended.*
- PPL to be amended to include a Moderate breeding and maintenance protocol. *Completed, submitted and amendment approved.*
- Shipment by direct route with no additional movement of animals nor drop in temperature. The shipment on 28<sup>th</sup> July was meant to have been direct, but there were issues with a drop in temperature within the van that meant that animals were transferred to a second van and the journey extended (we had not heard about this before the meeting). As far as we know, the shipment on 1<sup>st</sup> were direct and there were no issues with the van during transit. *Direct transport to reduce shipping time has therefore been trialled and does not appear to make a difference.*
- Pre-bleed of all animals prior to shipment for baseline. On arrival in Dundee, any unwell animals requiring cull, are to be bled and a postmortem performed (liver weighed, weight recorded and stored in formalin for analysis) as well as at least an equal number of well animals bled via the tail vein (not culled) for comparison. It is hoped that a biomarker can be found that will identify “at risk” animals. *As of today, there is serum from 5 control animals and 15 sick animals, as well as plasma from 8 sick animals taken at Dundee and liver material from 12 sick animals, with 3 livers to be taken from animals that have been well and used on a PK study to be taken tomorrow. These samples, along with the pre-bled samples taken at the supplier will be sent to a commercial company to perform liver enzyme tests for liver damage (AST/ ALT) and bile acid level tests (for liver function).*
- Mice to be changed on to RM1 diet at the source as there is some anecdotal evidence this might reduce the problem. *In process.*
- Following at least 3 weeks on a RM1 diet 12 animals shipped will have chenodeoxycholic acid added to the RM1 diet. This dietary supplement has been shown by others to reverse the hepatic effects of the change in bile acid composition in Cyp2c70 ko mice, a gene also deleted in this line. If this can be demonstrated, supplementing the diet may reduce issues. *Planned for this trial to start as soon as is practical, ideally this month.*
- If #4, #5 or #6 do not resolve the issue, the option to breed mice at Dundee will be considered. *Process to let this happen is already under investigation by PPL holder.*

**The committee will be fully updated with the outcomes of these proposals to try to identify the root cause of the problem at the next meeting to consider the next steps.**

**Closure of the xenopus colony:** The only researcher using this species is moving to another establishment in 2024. They can take around 40 of 120 animals for their continued use in research. We have been unable to identify any other establishments who would like any of the “spare” frogs. If we cannot get these animals “rehomed” we will need to cull them. We are in communication with the national repository in Portsmouth to see whether we might be able to offer oocytes gathered post-mortem to other establishments so that at least some use can be made of the culled animals.

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

[Standing agenda item]

The UVS reported as follows:

In relation to matters arising 2b, we believe that all our SC18 reports before this date have been dealt with.

**There have been two SC18 reports since the last meeting:**

- One on a GA line as per NVS report. Case closed.
- One animal was found dead after being administered a novel drug combination, having been noted as being sedated around 10 mins prior to being found dead. All other animals dosed were unaffected, but the drug combination will no longer be used. Case closed.
- There were three SC18 report from Jan-April reported at the last meeting that have also been closed.

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

[standing agenda item]

Training is proceeding as normal. The changes in Schedule 1 exposure to a rising concentration of carbon dioxide are now incorporated into the in-house training.

Since the last meeting there have been:

- 32 DOPS assessments, 32 Online Modules, 2 New PIL AB, 2 persons currently on PIL practical training, 2 surgical sessions held in-house, 1 Staff Member attended the CRL colony management Course.
- We held a refresher session of PIL and PPL holders, 27 PILs attended, and 14 PPL attended. Further dates are September and December.
- We are investigating NC3Rs Training (survey with researchers on preferences to be re-circulated).
- We are reviewing our PIL review process. We currently review every 5 years as required by ASRU. We may change to annually to review what procedures have been performed.
- Home Office now mandates a programme of training for non- PIL Animal Care Staff with identical learning outcomes to PIL. ASRU have not yet specified how the training is to be delivered. Most of the staff concerned have attended a SCOTPIL course (satisfying this requirement) at some point in

their careers. In May 2024 we conducted in-house training for all staff based on these learning outcomes. For new and recently employed staff we will suggest RAT self-learning modules at their own pace, and we will repeat the all-staff session every two years.

## 6 REPORT FROM THE NIO ON 3Rs

[standing agenda item]

- **Summary of 3Rs Champion Group.** A comprehensive list of plans and outputs from 3Rs Champion Group working on Reduction and Refinement was shared with the committee.
- The committee had a productive discussion on Replacement and how to capture the ongoing work at the University. EU52 and EU 60 modules on searching will be shared with our scientific community. The DBS has reached out to the Stem Cell Facility to discuss organoid work and scientists on the committee will supply names/cases for the DBS to follow up with.
- **Aberdeen 3Rs Group meeting.** The NIO met with the lead from the University of Aberdeen 3Rs working group with the aim being to share information and knowledge on techniques. They have expressed an interest in attending a 3Rs group or AWERB meeting in Dundee, with a return visit to the Aberdeen meetings by the NIO.
- In addition, the NIO will approach NIOs in the other Scottish Universities before the end of 2024 to extend networks and collaboration opportunities on developments and application of 3Rs opportunities.
- **Concordat on Openness and the 3Rs.** We, and other North-east of Scotland establishments, are signed up to the concordat for openness. As part of this, we are required to proactively seek ways to provide opportunities for the public to find out about animal research. The establishments felt that it is important to provide information to those within our organisations (staff and students) who are not involved in animal research on how the 3Rs are applied, as part of the wider public. In collaboration with the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments (FRAME), a joint virtual meeting is being planned for Autumn 2024.
- **PPL/PIL Mandatory Refresher Training.** In June we began our annual mandatory refresher training and committed the focus to 3Rs. We covered the PPL holders' responsibilities applying 3Rs, 3Rs Champion Team, highlighted the need for partial or full replacements for animals during projects and the requirement for PPL holders to provide evidence that replacements have been investigated pre award and PPL applications. Suggestions from PPL holders have been added to the 3Rs group task list.
- **Newsletter.** The first issue was circulated to the scientific community in June 2024 with the aim to be issued every other month. This includes a dedicated 3Rs section providing updates on ongoing work that may be of interest to all users and the AWERB.
- **3Rs Case Studies.** We in discussion with scientists gathering information on 3Rs case studies for publication on our webpage and SharePoint sites.
- **Study Plan Completion Report Information Database.** From 2022 to date there have been 229 completion reports reviewed for 3Rs and changes to best practice.

## 7 REPORT FROM THE DBS ON LICENSING MATTERS

[standing agenda item]

A comprehensive review of progress of each application submitted to the committee and to the Home Office since the last meeting was discussed. The turnaround time within the committee is very good once sufficient committee members commit to an application. The time taken at the Home Office is on average 40 working days for a new licence application (service level expectation), on most occasions less for minor amendments.

## 8 AOCB

- The Committee welcomed a new lay member.
- In response to a presentation on the importance of an Animal Technician at the recent ELSAV/ECLAM/AAALAC conference, the NVS has been asked to write this up as manuscript for publication.

## 9 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

31<sup>st</sup> October 2024.

23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025.

24<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025.

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

## 10 ACTION LOG

	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Update</b>
04/07/2024 Item 2c	Add AWERB Reflection as an Agenda item at the next meeting	DBS	Meeting 31/10/2024
04/07/2024 Item 2d	Share the NTS document with new project licence applicants. Contact the public engagement team to discuss the content of the NTS guidance document	NIO/DBS NIO/DBS	
04/07/2024 Item 2e	Share the updated AWERB Induction Pack document with the committee	DBS	Complete 05/07/2024
04/07/2024 Item 3	The committee will be fully updated with the outcomes of these proposals to try to identify the root cause of the problem seen in the GA line	NVS/DBS	Meeting 31/10/2024
04/07/2024 Item 6	Share the Biological Services Newsletter with the committee	DBS	Complete 05/07/2024
04/07/2024 Item 6	Replacements. Share a list and/or case studies with the DBS	Scientists on the committee	