



**STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL
NOT FOR FURTHER DISCLOSURE**

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

**The 63rd Meeting of the AWERB will be held virtually via MS Teams on
Tuesday 12th January 2021 from 10am - 12pm**

MINUTES

PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Present: [REDACTED]

In Attendance: [REDACTED]

Apologies: [REDACTED]

2. Minutes (AWERB/62/M)

The committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes (AWERB/63/01)

The Board **NOTED** the matters arising, the Chair asked that the actions regarding visits to the BRF remain on the matters arising log until such time that these can be carried out again.

PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

4. Terms of reference (AWERB/63/01)

The Board **REVIEWED** and **DISCUSSED** the current Terms of Reference for the AWERB and Applications Review Group. [REDACTED] shared the attached paper with the Named Training and Competency Officer, Named Veterinary Surgeon and the two lay members of AWERB prior to this meeting for their feedback and comments.

[REDACTED] commented that in [REDACTED] view the AWERB should have oversight of animal derived products used in research and teaching. [REDACTED] added that there are wider cultural questions which could perhaps be incorporated into the Terms of Reference; such as demonstrating how the AWERB/University is promoting the work being done at the Biomedical Research Facility and

how they are implementing the 3Rs as part of this work. [REDACTED] noted that at the University of Leicester they held an annual 3Rs Symposium, in which licence holders were invited to present to the AWERB methods and approaches in which they were incorporating best practice. [REDACTED] added that the focus is on affecting cultural change around research involving animals, and creating space in which to bring these issues to the fore.

[REDACTED] added that in general, Terms of Reference outline the responsibilities of a said Board/Committee, but rarely give practical examples of how the work is being carried out. [REDACTED] proposed that a grid format could be drawn up in which key objectives of the AWERB are identified with a parallel column which details of how we are implementing this. [REDACTED] said that this could then perhaps be reviewed annually.

[Action: [REDACTED] to set up a meeting for the Terms of Reference working group to discuss this in further detail. The working group will comprise of; [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] to bring the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference to the next AWERB meeting.]

[REDACTED] said that from [REDACTED] perspective the main purpose of the AWERB is to ensure we are compliant with Home Office regulations in regards to ASPA studies, which is a legal requirement. [REDACTED] added that there processes and procedures in place to ensure that these legal requirements are met and are incorporated into researchers' work as standard practice.

[REDACTED] said that [REDACTED] thought that the AWERB should feel empowered to challenge researchers where it has been deemed that adherence to the 3Rs has been insufficient. [REDACTED] suggested the wording; 'It is the role of the AWERB to give feedback on [...]' and [REDACTED] said that 'assurance' is also a useful term in this context.

[REDACTED] shared [REDACTED] thoughts with the group as to who would be the most appropriate Chair for the AWERB. [REDACTED] put forward [REDACTED] view that as a Project Licence holder, as well as the Establishment Licence Holder there is a conflict of interest in [REDACTED] chairing the AWERB, making impartiality a challenge. It was [REDACTED]'s view that it would be more appropriate for the position of Chair to the AWERB to be held by an independent senior member of academic staff (who isn't involved in animal research). [REDACTED] suggested that the Head of School for Psychology, [REDACTED] may be a possible candidate to consider. [REDACTED] added that if [REDACTED] were not to continue as Chair to the AWERB that [REDACTED] involvement with AWERB would be in no way diminished.

5. Report from the Chair

The Board **RECEIVED** a brief oral report from the outgoing Chair [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] introduced [REDACTED] to the group who will also be taking over as Establishment Licence Holder within the Home Office. [REDACTED] thanked AWERB members for their contribution to Animal Welfare during [REDACTED] tenure as Chair of the AWERB.

6. Report from the Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer (NACWO) (AWERB/63/03)

- 6.1 The Board **RECEIVED** an overview of the NACWO report. [REDACTED] said the BRF's involvement with the Home Office is current as we have several active project licences, both new and amended. [REDACTED] added that he is in regular contact with our Local Home Office Inspector [REDACTED].

■ added that he would like to see a separate and more detailed report for the Named Training and Competency Officer (NCO) report going forward.

[Action: ■ and ■ to discuss in further detail how best to implement this, and bring this to the next AWERB meeting.]

6.2 Biomedical Facility Refurbishment

The Board **RECEIVED** an oral update from ■ regarding the Biomedical Facility Refurbishment. ■ reported the refurbishment to date has been very low impact, both on the animals and the research the animals are involved in. The refurbishment is on track for completion by 22nd February 2021, and will be either on, or under budget.

Regarding staffing levels, one member of staff has recently started her maternity leave and her position will not be backfilled with a temporary member of staff.

■ said that there have been two Condition 18 reports submitted to the Home Office recently; the Local Home Office Inspector gave ■ advice on these, and is satisfied with our communication and explanations did not feel the need for further escalation. ■ said that ■ during his tenure as Chair has always stressed transparency and openness in reporting.

6.3 Covid-19 response report (AWERB/63/04)

The Board **RECEIVED** a report on the BRF's response to Covid-19 in a staff survey. It has been agreed that during this current lockdown that there would be no two team working. This decision was arrived at for a number of reasons; firstly, ■ felt that it would spread the team too thinly. Secondly, it was felt that due to the nature of the work and the high standard of PPE being used as standard in the BRF, along with the appropriate social distancing measures that two team working would not be necessary. ■ has taken on board feedback from staff regarding fatigue in regards to manual handling and repetitive actions which are having a physical toll on some of the Animal Technicians. By having the full complement of staff in the BRF the idea is that staff can then work condensed hours, therefore reducing staff fatigue.

■ extended his thanks to ■ regarding a letter which he sent out to all project licence holders outlining the position of the recommencement of research at the BRF.

■ and ■ went through the questions raised by the RSPCA and ■ sent out a staff questionnaire to BRF staff based on these questions. ■ said that in terms there was some positive feedback, however, Animal Technicians reported feeling undervalued. It was acknowledged that ■ sent an e-mail to all BRF staff to extend his personal thanks for their hard work and dedication. ■ voiced his disappointment in the lack of engagement in this report from members, when previously circulated via e-mail to the AWERB.

[Action: ■ to write to project licence holders to encourage them to write to colleagues involved in supporting their research to personally extend their thanks.]

■ asked for clarity as to when the questionnaire was carried out, ■ said this was sent out in November 2020. ■ may repeat the questionnaire in the spring of this year and compare the results. ■ stated that the Health & Safety of our staff is paramount and should always be at the forefront of our efforts.

[Action: ■ and ■ to reach out to staff regarding their proposed plans at the BRF.]

7. Report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)

The Board **RECEIVED** an oral report from [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] noted that the past three months have been tumultuous due to the lockdowns and disrupted travel plans which have led to a lack of in person visits to the BRF.

[REDACTED] mentioned that he has received very few notifications regarding sick animals recently. [REDACTED] confirmed that there aren't any animal welfare issues to report at present. A health screen of mice will be needed following the duct cleaning. [REDACTED] said that he is in the process of setting up a dedicated BRF e-mail address to ensure that no one is inadvertently left off of e-mail communications.

8. General Animal Husbandry Report (AWERB/63/05)

The Board **DISCUSSED** and **APPROVED** a draft SOP for the spot cleaning of cages. [REDACTED] said that daily inspection of mice is a legal requirement, however there is no mandated frequency in terms of more detailed checks and spot cleaning. After liaising with the Home Office Inspector to enquire whether these more detailed checks could be carried out less frequently, in order to help reduce pressure on staff during lockdown. [REDACTED] received assurance that this would be permissible. There were no objections from AWERB members in regards to these proposed changes.

PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

9. Actions of the Applications Review Group (ARG) (AWERB/63/06)

The Board **NOTED** a summary of activity from the Applications Review Group for the period 1st October 2020 – 10th January 2021.

10. Singly Housed Mice Report (AWERB/63/07)

The Committee **NOTED** the report on Singly Housed Mice. [REDACTED] noted that some of the figures were high, and that it would be useful to have a breakdown of the figures by reason for the single housing, for example, post-surgery observation, aggression, etc.

One of the reasons behind mice being singly housed was that litter mates who do not have the appropriate genotype for the study are usually culled. [REDACTED] asked for clarification as to why culling was necessary in this instance. [REDACTED] said that one reason is that it can make observation difficult when carrying out infrared filming for example, but [REDACTED] conceded that this would only account for a small number.

[REDACTED] suggested that ear tags could perhaps be used to differentiate the mice possessing the appropriate genotype. [REDACTED] added that although not palatable, cost is also a consideration in regards to litter numbers, which also must be borne in mind. [REDACTED] added that [REDACTED], for example, implements group housing by default in the first instance for surgically prepared mice

[Action: [REDACTED] to contact researchers with high numbers of singly housed mice and ask them for an explanation and a breakdown of the reasons for this. [REDACTED] also to put forward

█'s suggestion regarding ear tags.]

[Action: █ to ask █ to share best practice regarding Singly Housed Mice with colleagues.]

11. Non-ASPA Activity (AWERB/63/08)

The Board **NOTED** the report on non-ASPA activity. The report highlighted an example of our ethics processes having a positive impact on animal welfare in Australia. Due to the global pandemic, one of our researchers █ was required to commence █ research at another institution, namely; Queensland University, Australia. However, AWERB still required oversight of this research and the Named Veterinary Surgeon █ identified a short fall in the application regarding the cage sizes used for the chicks and finches. █ formally acknowledged and thanked █ for his work and advice regarding this matter, and for implementing positive changes to Animal Welfare policy. █ added that it would be useful to bring a presentation on our non-ASPA work and processes to a future Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (REIC) meeting.

[Action: █ and █ to liaise regarding a presentation at a future REIC meeting.]

12. Recommencement of research at the Biomedical Research Facility (AWERB/63/09)

The Board **NOTED** a letter sent by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research on Tuesday 6th January 2021, outlining the current position regarding research activity at the BRF in light of the new strain of Covid-19.

13. A Verbal Update on Animal Derived Materials Working Group

The Board **NOTED** an oral update from the Animal Derived Materials Working Group from █. The group is a pan-sector body and membership consists of other Universities as well as public sector bodies who are involved in the use of animal derived materials, such as the British Museum.

One of █'s actions has been to contact our suppliers to ask them for a statement regarding the ethical and humane sourcing of their materials. In █'s experience to date, this information has not been readily available or easily accessible, and that it is by asking these questions that the University as a customer can put positive pressure on the industry, and shape it to be as ethical and transparent as possible.

█ added that it would be beneficial to have to have a list of departments which use animals and animal derived products in their teaching.

[Action: █ to share the Terms of Reference for this working group with █ for reference.]

PART IV – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

█ noted that a former AWERB lay member, █ suggested that each year the AWERB present a 'Programme of Work' to its members setting out the objectives for the year, including areas of particular focus which could then be reviewed annually. █ deferred to the incoming

Chair to decide whether or not this was something he'd like to take forward.

14. Dates of future meetings

- 13 April 2021
- 01 July 2021

(Unless advised otherwise, all meetings will be held virtually via Microsoft Teams from 10am to 12pm.)

AWERB Membership

Ex-officio

█ [REDACTED]

Representative members

█ [REDACTED]

In attendance

█ [REDACTED]