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Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

The 68th Meeting of the AWERB was held virtually via MS Teams on
Friday 22 April 2022 from 9am – 11am

DRAFT – MINUTES

PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Present: [REDACTED]

In Attendance: [REDACTED] (Secretary)

Apologies: [REDACTED]

The Chair welcomed [REDACTED] to her inaugural meeting as a member of the AWERB. [REDACTED]

2. Minutes - (AWERB/67/M)

2.1 The Body **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 27 January 2022.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes - (AWERB/68/01)

3.1 The Body **NOTED** current actions outstanding from the previous meeting. There was a general discussion regarding training, [REDACTED] highlighted the need for more trainers as current trainers are overstretched.

The Chair added that a current list of trainers would be useful to include in the NCTO report to AWERB going forward. [REDACTED] said that all training records have now been standardized and added that the imminent move to an online system will help with this, and will also make reporting more current and dynamic.

[Action: [REDACTED] to organize a meeting regarding training to include; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to explain the current training processes in place and develop a strategy for

future training. [REDACTED] to update on progress at the next AWERB meeting.]

[REDACTED] added that researchers are transient, so it is prudent to train colleagues who will be with us more than a year. [REDACTED] noted that it takes time and resources to train colleagues and therefore we must be selective and choose colleagues who will have a certain degree of longevity in the BRF.

[REDACTED] said that the vulnerability in the current system lies around a lack of pre-emptive actions; especially in regards to communication regarding which researchers will be joining the BRF, and when. [REDACTED] said that it is often the case that BRF staff do not know which research group a colleague will be joining until they arrive. [REDACTED] said that she has experienced being told just two weeks prior to arrival that a researcher would be joining.

[REDACTED] suggested that we upskill some of our more senior Animal Technicians and train them to carrying out IP injections for example. There was a discussion around the importance of 'baseline training' being provided early on when a researcher joins the BRF, which can in turn be 'topped up' when required. [REDACTED] noted that the NCTO has introduced dedicated days for training which are Wednesday and Thursdays, which will help with capacity issues and also allow for ad hoc training to be given.

[REDACTED] echoed the value of being able to see who in a specific research group is trained and agreed that an online system would help with this. In regards to the online training database, [REDACTED] said that he has had 3 meetings with [REDACTED] to date; in the latest meeting there was a discussion about how the system could be integrated with our current ways of working. [REDACTED] said that he anticipates financial approval by June 2022, with a proposed implementation timeline of September 2022.

PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

4. Applications Review Group Membership

- 4.1 AWERB members **DISCUSSED** and **CONSIDERED** the current ARG membership, as well as alternative models for the review of new PPL applications and PPL amendments.

The NACWO highlighted to the group that part of the Home Office Change Programme will entail increased oversight of PPL reviews, and this peer review and rigour should be demonstrably evidenced to the Home Office. We do not yet know what this increased oversight of reviews will entail, it may be that the Home Office wish to see copies of minutes from review meetings, or they may develop a feedback proforma.

Therefore, engagement from the Applications Review Group (ARG) is of the utmost importance. [REDACTED] informed members of the AWERB of her intention to stand down as a member of ARG due to other work commitments. The group will therefore have a vacancy for a [REDACTED] representative member.

There was a general discussion regarding how best to distribute PPL amendments and reviews. [REDACTED] noted that certain periods in the academic year are busier than others, and

that her preference would be to have reviews sent to her during times when she has fewer teaching hours. ■ also posited that PPL reviews and amendments could perhaps be assigned to a 'Principal Reviewer' which is then expected to provide a more thorough review and feedback. The other reviewers would also contribute but their feedback would not be expected to be as detailed. This is a system in place in other types of review which could be implemented by the ARG.

■ said that currently the membership of the ARG is quite small, and the question was posed as to whether the group is too small to be effective as a reviewing body. One suggestion was to have a 'pool' of suitable researchers to draw upon. Both ■ and ■ cautioned against including PhD students and Early Career Researchers in order to protect their time and not overwhelm them.

■ agreed to the proposal to extend the ARG membership, he noted however that further work is needed to work up the process on how reviewers are assigned to PPL reviews and amendments. The question of whether we can look to external review was posed and ■ said that this would be a possibility, especially where there are gaps in our knowledge amongst our researchers. However, the point was made that researchers may be wary of external reviewers in regards to protecting their Intellectual Property and sharing this with potential competitors. **[Action: ■ to meet with ■ to discuss in further detail how to incorporate the suggestions from today's meeting.]**

5. **Named Animal Care and Welfare and Bio Medical Facility Manager Updates (AWERB/68/02)**

- 5.1 The NACWO gave an update to the group on the KPMG audit actions update, all actions have been completed and closed. The follow-up report was presented at the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC), which is a sub-committee of Council and this was well received and ARC are assured of improvements put in place.

In the absence of the NCTO, ■ gave an update regarding training to the group; he reiterated what was mentioned earlier in the meeting regarding the progress with the procurement of an online database. Namely, that discussions with ■ are progressing, and the timeline for implementation is September 2022. This new system should help to streamline processes as well as make reporting more current, and quicker to produce reports due to increased consistency of processes.

■ gave an update regarding staffing in the BRF, one of our Animal Technicians is leaving as well as our Senior Fish Technician, who will be leaving in July 2022. ■ said that it is not his intention at present to replace this role like for like, as in his opinion more resilience is needed within the team so that everyone has competency in this area. ■ noted that due to staff sickness previously, that this had highlighted the lack of resilience in the team in this area. ■ plans to introduce a 3-6 month staff rotation for working with the fish to gradually increase confidence and resiliency within the team.

Key areas of knowledge to focus on in training will be to identify clinical signs of ill-health in the fish, as well as a deeper understanding of water quality control. ■ mentioned a Zebra fish course which is run in Italy, ■ noted that she had attended this training and

recommends it. ■ said he plans to send one member of the team on this training who then can then return to the BRF and share their learnings with the wider team.

The NVS gave a brief verbal update to the group, there were no particular health issues to bring to the AWERB's attention on this occasion. The NVS highlighted that there has been a lot of focus on studies involving rats, and wished to highlight that we currently have a level of expertise in this area, which will be lost when colleagues move on, and to consider training and other pathways to retain this knowledge within the BRF. A recent external health report on the rodents has been carried out, and he expects the results to be back by the next meeting.

6. **AWERB Webpages Update**

- 6.1 The Body **RECEIVED** a verbal update report on the internal AWERB Webpages from the AWERB Secretary. ■ has added additional sections in the left hand column on the webpage, which include the following headers; Case Studies (which now ■ research on Alzheimer's), News, Events and Training Opportunities, Useful Links and Key Documents and Cross Sector Working. ■ encouraged AWERB members to contact her with any suggestions for additions to the webpages and encouraged colleagues to let her know of any relevant Communications stories to include as well.

It was agreed that the external webpages require additional material. **[Action: ■ to work with the Digital Communications Team to add a case studies section on the external website to give context to the animal usage figures.]**

7. **Home Office Annual Returns of Procedures (AWERB/68/03)**

- 7.1 The AWERB **RECEIVED** and **DISCUSSED** the Home Office Annual Returns of Procedures figures. In the interest of transparency and as part of our commitment as a signatory of the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research, we publish our returns on our external webpage. In summary, there has been an increase in fish usage and an increase in rat usage in moderate procedures.

PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

8. **Concordat on Openness in Animal Research Action Plan (AWERB/68/04)**

- 8.1 The AWERB **NOTED** the COAR Action Plan. ■ commented that at the University of Leicester they have a 'Culture of Care' statement on their website, ■ said that this would be a good thing to develop and introduce to our webpages. There have been no nominations for 'The 3Rs Animal Welfare Award' received as yet. **[Action: ■ to add 'The 3Rs Animal Welfare Award' to the BRF User Group Meeting agenda. ■ to meet with ■ to work on a 'Culture of Care' statement to be published on our website.]**

The Chair suggested that a '3Rs Working Group' be established in order to drive this agenda forward. **[Action: ■ to add this to the agenda at the next BRF User Group meeting.]** Once the working group has been established, it was agreed that this should become a standing item on the AWERB agenda.

9. Applications Review Group (ARG) Report (AWERB/68/05)

- 9.1 The AWERB **NOTED** a summary of activity from the Applications Review Group, including non-ASPA studies.

PART IV – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10. Dates of future meetings

- Friday 14 July 2022: 10am – 12pm, MS Teams

AWERB Membership

Ex-officio

- AWERB Chair and Representative of the Biomedical Research Facility User Group: [REDACTED]
- Establishment Licence Holder: [REDACTED]
- Named Veterinary Surgeon: [REDACTED]
- Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer (NACWO) and BRF Manager: [REDACTED]

Representative members

- Two lay members, at least one of whom should have no responsibility under the Act:
- [REDACTED]
- Project Licence Holders representative: [REDACTED]
- Personal Licence Holders representative: [REDACTED]
- School of Psychology representative: [REDACTED]
- Brighton and Sussex Medical School representative: [REDACTED]

In attendance

- Named Training and Competency Officer (NCTO) and BRF Deputy Manager: [REDACTED]
- Chair of the BRF Management Forum (at the invitation of the Chair as appropriate but to attend at least one meeting per academic year.)
- Senior Research Governance Manager: [REDACTED]
- Secretary to the AWERB: [REDACTED]