



ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODY (AWERB)

**Minutes of a virtual meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body held on
Thursday 2 July 2020 from 10.00am to 12.00pm**

PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Present

██████████ (Chair and Establishment Licence Holder), ██████████ (Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer), ██████████ (School of Psychology), ██████████ (Representative of the Personal Licence Holders), ██████████ (Deputy Manager, BRF and Named Training and Competency Officer), and ██████████ (Named Veterinary Surgeon).

In attendance: ██████████ (Research Governance Officer) and ██████████ (Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from: Professor ██████████ (Representative of the Project Licence Holders), ██████████ (Representative of the Biomedical Research Facility (BRF) User Group), ██████████ (Lay Member), ██████████ (BSMS), and ██████████ (Local Home Office Inspector).

2. Minutes

The AWERB **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2020 (**AWERB/60/M**) as an accurate record of the meeting.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

The AWERB **NOTED** an update of the current actions outstanding (**AWERB/61/01**).

Due to the current Covid-19 measures in place it had not been possible to schedule AWERB member visits to the BRF and this action would remain ongoing.

The University of Brighton had put ██████████ in contact with a potential lay member for the AWERB and their response was awaited.

[ACTION: ██████████ to schedule AWERB member visits to the BRF once Covid-19 restrictions are eased.]

PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

4. Report from the Chair

The AWERB **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Chair. Of note:

- The Chair welcomed the re-opening of most research laboratories, noting

however that it was not known when government 'lockdown' restrictions would be lifted in the wider community.

- The full impact of Covid-19 on the University's finances was not yet known. Consequently the £350M capital spending programme - including the planned network improvements across campus - had been paused to enable the University to take stock of the financial situation. In the meantime, essential maintenance work was ongoing, with business continuity planning a priority.

5. Report from the Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer (NACWO)

The AWERB **RECEIVED** an update report from the NACWO (**AWERB/61/02**) which included the NTCO report and an overview of the Covid-19 response. Key points:

- The Home Office had approved [REDACTED] new Programme Project Licence (PPL). A new PPL application had been submitted by [REDACTED] for presentation and review at a virtual meeting of the Applications Review Group.
- The purchase order for the BRF refurbishment had been approved. [REDACTED] was due to meet with the main contractor to explain the finer project details. AWERB member [REDACTED] (Representative of the Personal Licence Holders) was also a member of the BRF Refurbishment Project Group.
- [REDACTED] (HOI) had requested information on chick-work, to ensure that it was non-A(SP)A as declared, [REDACTED] had confirmed this was the case for current work but had requested a protocol for a schedule of planned chick-work from the researcher. This would be sent to the HOI.
- Surgical training was on hold due to Covid-19 measures but discussions were underway with the NVS and Health and Safety to establish when and how this might be resumed. Many other animal units nationally had also paused training.

Covid-19 Update

- A pattern of alternate team working (one week BRF/one week working remotely) was working well and staff morale was good. There had been a noticeable increase in the confidence of junior staff as a result of the responsibility they had been given, and staff had demonstrated high levels of commitment during challenging times. The Chair praised the BRF team's hard work and dedication and undertook to write to staff to convey the AWERB's warm thanks for their efforts. [REDACTED] would provide details for the Chair.

ACTION: [REDACTED] to draft e-mail for [REDACTED] to send to BRF staff

- A phased return to research was underway, with breeding lines recommenced and some new studies introduced. The re-start of research brought with it training requirements which would need to be managed.
- Covid-19 staffing patterns in CRPC and JMS, where researchers work on a split team basis of 2.5 days a week either Mon-Wed or Wed-Fri, did not always align with BRF schedules. [REDACTED] (Head of Technical Services, Life Sciences) had been very helpful in terms of accommodating specific requests.
- Changes to BRF staffing patterns and certain processes as a result of Covid-19 measures had not impacted on animal welfare. It was noted that some of the changes introduced had been positive and would be retained when Covid-19 measures eased.

Singly Housed Mice

- The AWERB was asked to note the number of singly housed mice (SHM) and to agree a system for AWERB monitoring of this as good practice. Noting that the Home Office recommended norm was to group-house mice, it was agreed that instances of SHM should be justified, with overall numbers recorded and percentages monitored. The AWERB therefore agreed that a 'Singly Housed Mice Update Report' would be a standing item on the agenda and should include:
 - total numbers and numbers by researcher
 - percentage of overall population and percentage by researcher

Researchers would be required to submit a written justification of SHM to include:

- the reason/s for SHM
- where group-housing had been unsuccessful, documented evidence of this

ACTION: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] to set up reporting system and standing agenda item for Singly Housed Mice.

6. Report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)

- The AWERB **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS). Of note: There were no issues to report.
- Routine in-person visits had resumed but at a reduced fortnightly frequency.
- The NVS would be happy to attend the BRF upon request and/or to assist with any training.

PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

7. Actions of the Applications Review Group (ARG)

The AWERB **NOTED** the summary of actions undertaken by the ARG (**AWERB/61/03**) since the last AWERB meeting.

8. Home Office decisions on PPL amendments and new project licences

The AWERB **NOTED** the summary of decisions taken by the Home Office regarding PPL amendments and new project licences (**AWERB/61/04**).

9. Response to the 2020 Concordat on Openness Annual Review

The AWERB **NOTED** the response data for the 2020 Concordat on Openness Annual Review Survey (**AWERB/61/05**).

10. Dates of future meetings

Dates of future meetings would be agreed following the finalisation of the University calendar for 2020/21.

11. Any other business

11.1 General Animal Husbandry

The AWERB was asked to approve the continuation of the spot- cleaning of cages which had been introduced temporarily in response to reduced Covid-19 staffing levels. It was noted that spot-cleaning had proved successful, with no detriment to animal welfare noted, and was in line with RSCPA 'good practice' advice.

The following points were discussed:

- potential interference with research; especially in longitudinal behavioural or food-restriction studies where cleaning on specific days/a routine was preferable;
- the introduction through random spot-cleaning of unknown variables into experiments; and
- the possible adverse effects of reduced routine cleaning, such as problems with first time litters.

It was agreed that these issues should be discussed further by the BRF and Research Groups, and that ways forward could include agreed cage cleaning routines for specific colonies/studies, with spot-cleaning otherwise the default.

In order to reach a decision on spot-cleaning, the AWERB agreed that it would be helpful to receive a report at the next meeting to include Research Groups' feedback and BRF data/proposals for the above.

[ACTION: ██████████ to report to the next meeting on Research Group feedback and BRF data/proposals for spot-cleaning]

11.2 AWERB Membership 2020 / 2021

It was agreed that the Membership would be carried forward to 2020/21. The Chair would be confirmed once the new Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research) was in post.

Members agreed that a review of the AWERB's terms of reference, constitution and membership (TRCM) would be welcome. This should include looking at ways to promote greater: interaction with BRF staff and researchers; and AWERB engagement with sectoral themes. It was agreed that ██████████ and ██████████ (pending his return from furlough leave) would lead the review and bring proposals/a timeline for this to the next meeting.

[ACTION: ██████████ to contact ██████████ regarding his return from furlough leave and to co-review the AWERB TRCM, bringing proposals/review time-line to the next meeting.]

██████████
Secretary
9 July 2020