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**Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)**

**The 65<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the AWERB was held virtually via MS Teams on  
Thursday 8 July 2021 from 10am - 12pm**

**DRAFT - MINUTES**

**PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

**Present:** [REDACTED]

**In Attendance:** [REDACTED]

**Apologies:** [REDACTED]

**2. Minutes - (AWERB/64/M)**

The Body **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2021.

**3. Matters arising from the Minutes - (AWERB/65/01)**

The committee **NOTED** the current actions outstanding from the previous meeting held on 21 April 2021. The need for a bespoke database for tracking training and competencies was reiterated by the NCTO and [REDACTED] updated the committee that a business case has been submitted for this. [REDACTED] said that the KPMG audit helped to drive this forward the business need for a database and is hopeful for a positive outcome.

[REDACTED] gave an update on the progress with implementing a 3Rs Award to recognize innovative ways of working and advancement of animal welfare. [REDACTED] has been liaising with the Awards Teams Manager, but has come up against some difficulties regarding requiring School approval and sign off for a financial award, as well as tax implications. HR need to be informed of any financial award, even if this is shop vouchers as their tax is then modified to take this into account.

[REDACTED] said that the award was about recognition and prestige, and that instead of a financial award, we could present a certificate at an event signed by him, in his capacity as [REDACTED] or perhaps even the Vice-Chancellor. [REDACTED] said this should be advertised widely

and managers should actively encourage staff to apply. Winning such an award would be a good addition to a colleague's resumé.

**[Action: ■ to update the Body on progress on the process and implementation of the 3Rs Award at the next meeting.]**

■ has progressed with arranging a meeting with the new Director of Communications, Marketing and Advancement, ■ to discuss how we can better align to our COAR signatory commitments.

## PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

### 4. Retrospective Project Licence Review (AWERB/65/02)

4.1 The Body **DISCUSSED** and **REVIEWED** the end of term retrospective review presented by ■ from the School of Life Sciences entitled; 'Neuronal communication in fish'. ■ said the principal research question is concerned with the relationship between the visual sense and other neurological sensations. In order to do this, he and his team will be observing and analysing the connection between neurons via imaging methods, in which neurons can be observed firing in real time. Researchers are striving to understand the neural code by analysing the information processed at the synapse level.

4.2 In regards to justification and replacement Zebra fish are used in this research because when these fish are young and still in the larval stage their skin is transparent, which allows for neuro-observation via a multiphoton microscope. The fish are bred to express certain proteins which fluoresce. Another reason why Zebra fish are used is because they have very good vision, and they possess a similar eye structure to that of humans.

4.3 In regards reduction and the breeding of the fish to use in the study, ■ said that we have a number of different lines, as some are bred to express different proteins and we also use cryopreserved lines. ■ said that we have deposit lines in a facility in Oregon, US. ■ said that it is difficult to avoid some wastage in regards to the overproduction of fish, as it is difficult to predict how many will be produced, and how many will survive. ■ added that we share a lot of fish with other research groups to reduce wastage as much as possible.

4.4 In regards to reducing distress in the fish undergoing the imaging, ■ said that as the fish's skin is transparent, we can observe the heart beating and therefore monitor the heart rate to ascertain whether the fish is unduly stressed by the process, and if they are they will be humanely euthanised.

4.5 Comments received from the AWERB were as follows:

- ■ queried the use of Tricaine as an analgesic, as this can be an irritant to fish. ■ suggested that Etomidate could be considered as an alternative. ■ said that although Tricaine is widely used, he would be prepared to try this and compare the findings. ■ suggested the best way to do this and to gain meaningful data would be to carry this out in conjunction with other labs. ■ added that in regards to best practice the Zebrafish Husbandry Working Group which she sits on may have some useful information and ■ will send on further details.
- ■ queried whether the anaesthesia interferes with sensory processing. ■ confirmed that it does, which is why they wait a certain amount of time before commencing imaging.

- In regards to euthanasia, it was noted that Aquased is listed in the application, however, rapid chilling is an alternative technique which is also used. ■ added that good results have been recorded using lidocaine.
- ■ queried the use of agar, as this would restrict movement and therefore the neurons being activated. ■ clarified that only the head is embedded in the agar solution, and not the tail.

4.6 The Chair commended ■ on the £3 million of funding which was secured via a Wellcome Trust Award, and added that this should be included on the website as a good news story. ■ said he would be pleased for this to appear on the website and added that the University of Leicester were very proactive in this area. **[Action: The Secretary to liaise with ■ regarding some wording and images that can be added to the website.]**

## 5. **UAR Concordat on Openness in Animal Research (COAR) Survey Responses (AWERB/65/03)**

5.1 The Board **NOTED** and **DISCUSSED** our responses to the Understanding Animals in Research annual survey and how we can improve upon areas of weakness. Research Officer, ■ gave an overview of the background and purpose of the survey to the Body. ■ said that he was encouraged that over the past two years or so there has been some notable improvements in openness and engagement. ■ credited ■ for being proactive in offering tours of the Biomedical Research Facility to staff members who were interested in learning more.

## 6. **Concordat on Openness in Animal Research (COAR) Action Plan (AWERB/65/04)**

6.1 The Body **DISCUSSED** and **AGREED** the action plan against the four COAR principles. This item was also presented by ■ and it was noted that further discussion regarding the commitment to openness was required with colleagues in the Communications Team regarding the possibility of using social media platforms such as Twitter etc. to expand our reach.

## 7. **NACWO, NTCO, NIO and NVS Updates (AWERB/65/05)**

7.1 The Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer, the Named Training and Competency Officer and the Named Information Officer gave an overview of their update report. ■ said that £1 million of funding has been allocated to install a new air flow system in the Biomedical Research Facility. Security and Estates Facilities (SEF) have also identified some funding to paint some of the rooms at the BRF, as well as install new scrub sinks. In regards to estates and infrastructure the need to improve wi-fi connectivity at the facility was noted.

The Chair queried the role of the Named Information Officer and asked who held this responsibility. ■ said that in comparison with the other named roles, this one was less clearly defined and that he held this position currently. The Chair suggested that the internal website could be used more for communications which are currently circulating via e-mail.

## 7.2 **Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) update (Verbal Update)**

■ said that a visiting academic from the Oxford University was present to deliver training to

colleagues on surgical techniques on mice. ■ said that this was refreshing after many months of receiving training solely online via Zoom and webinars etc.

■ wished to give credit to ■ for recently carrying out a challenging surgery involving destabilizing the median meniscus.

■ said that Aquased, which is the only licensed drug for the use of euthanasia is new to the BRF and welcomed.

■ noted that he has made the case for having a designated surgery assistant, particularly to aid researchers performing complex surgeries. ■ said that he was supportive of this and would like a Veterinary Technician role to be established at the BRF, and this would be in line with industry standards. ■ added that support regarding aseptic techniques would be appreciated.

### 7.3 NCTO

■ gave a brief overview to the Body, she said that she has been working with researchers who have historically been delivering training to gain consistency of approach, across all colleagues offering training.

■ has introduced trainer assessment, in order to ensure that colleagues are competent to deliver training and this has been well received.

■ noted that in the current AWERB Terms of Reference the NCTO is not a full member of the Body, the Chair agreed that given this pivotal role the NCTO should be added to the updated Terms of Reference as a full member of the AWERB.

## PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

### 8. Home Office - 'Change Programme' (AWERB/65/06)

8.1 The Board **NOTED** and **CONSIDERED** an update on proposed Home Office changes to inspections and applications and to **DISCUSSED** the implications of its' implementation.

■ said that the speed at which the Home Office are transitioning and intending to implement these changes is a concern. ■ added that another area which needs to be managed carefully is the consistency of approach, in lieu of a named establishment inspector.

8.2 The main changes identified by the Home Office Change Programme are as follows;

- There will no longer be an allocated establishment Home Office Inspector
- The implementation of a Compliance Advice Team. This will be regarding Section 18 reports etc. and the team will have a dedicated e-mail box.
- The implementation of a Licencing Team (no change to the current system, this will continue to be carried out via ASPeL.)
- The introduction of 'Special Measures' for facilities which are identified as needing additional support.
- Visits - more audits and thematic audits and these will also be documented, with more defined action plans.

■ is awaiting the release of FAQs to disseminate amongst colleagues. The Chair raised the point of who will sit on the AWERB once we no longer have ■ as our Local

Home Office Inspector? ■ said that he didn't envision this being an issue as ■ is only occasionally available to attend the meetings and his membership was purely in his capacity as an observer, rather than a full member of the committee.

In regards to Special Measures, ■ said this can be triggered by the number of Condition 18 reports submitted, which could lead to less transparency and fewer reports being submitted. The term Special Measures implies non-compliance, and could have reputational repercussions. ■ has feedback regarding the terminology used. The exact criteria for an establishment to be deemed under Special Measures is currently being defined. ■ noted that Council's Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) will be interested in how this develops.

A potential lack of consistency was identified as a possible drawback to the new 'taxi rank' system in regards to inspector allocation.

## 9. KPMG Audit Update (AWERB/65/07)

- 9.1 The Body **NOTED** an update of actions and next steps arising from the KPMG Audit. The NCTO has recently carried out two internal audits, looking at controls and preventative actions. The root cause analysis published by KPMG has now been fully implemented, including the standardisation of documentation. The team are currently trialling the use of BOX as a means for tracking approvals.

In regards to the implementation of a 3Rs Award ■ has shared the minutes from the previous AWERB meeting in which this was agreed upon with ■, as this would fulfil the action regarding staff recognition.

## 10. Animal Derived Materials Working Group Update (AWERB/65/08)

- 10.1 The AWERB **NOTED** an update from the ADM Working Group. The Working Group is led by the Wellcome Sanger Institute, and the project initiation document has now been agreed. Lay member ■ commented on what a valuable initiative this is, and noted that ■ has witnessed the impact on animal welfare at ■ who have recently started approaching suppliers and making enquiries regarding their welfare standards and practices.

## 11. Applications Review Group (ARG) Report (AWERB/65/09)

- 11.1 The AWERB **NOTED** a summary report of activity from the Applications Review Group.

## 12. Forthcoming training opportunities, links to useful resources and news items

*For AWERB members to disseminate amongst relevant colleagues such as; PPL holders and animal technicians etc. as appropriate.*

- 12.1 [Recordings](#) for the webinar 'The Animal Welfare Body - A Catalyst for Progress' hosted by the EFPIA and the RSPCA held on Friday 18 June 2021.
- 12.2 The [11th World Congress](#) on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences (WC11), will be held virtually from Monday 23 August 2021 to Thursday 02 September 2021.
- 12.3 NC3Rs hosted training '[Animal Research: Critical, Challenging & Creative Thinking Course](#)' held from Monday 19 July 2021 to Thursday 22 July 2021, Cost: £300.

12.4 Sentience Bill public enquiry: The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Select Committee has launched an inquiry into the [Animal Welfare \(Sentience\) Bill](#)

**PART IV – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**13. Dates of future meetings**

- 22 September 2021
- 11 January 2022
- 12 April 2022

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

**AWERB Membership**

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]