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Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

The 69th Meeting of the AWERB was held virtually via MS Teams on
Friday 15 July 2022 from 10am – 12pm

DRAFT – MINUTES

PART I – PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Present: [REDACTED]

In Attendance: [REDACTED] Secretary), [REDACTED]

Apologies: [REDACTED]

2. Minutes - (AWERB/68/M)

2.1 The Body **APPROVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 22 April 2022.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes - (AWERB/69/01)

3.1 The Body **NOTED** current actions outstanding from the previous meeting.

PART II – MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR DECISION

4. [REDACTED] – Retrospective Review – ‘Synapse dysfunction and Glutamate Receptor Ion channels’ - (AWERB/69/02)

4.1 [REDACTED] was in attendance at this meeting to present his Retrospective Review to AWERB members. Retrospective Reviews are mandatory for all project licence holders. The presentation was well received by the group.

In regards to breeding using male rats older than 12 months, [REDACTED] highlighted that in the Home Office guidance they are now advising that the use of older males for breeding purposes is permissible. The Chair wished to commend [REDACTED] in particular for his work around ‘Replacement’ as one of the ‘3Rs’ in his use of computational analysis where possible.

[Action: The Secretary to record the presentations going forward. ■ to liaise with ■ regarding next steps.]

5. Verbal update from Lay Members on a recent BRF Tour of Facilities

5.1 Both lay members of the AWERB, ■ and ■ recently attended a tour of the Biomedical Research Facilities which was led by the BRF manager, ■. ■ invited the lay members to share their impressions and feedback with the AWERB.

■ noted that she was pleased to witness that there were enrichment in the Zebra fish tanks and also commended the Rehoming Policy which had been developed by the team. ■ witnessed good morale and strong working relationships amongst staff. In regards to the negatives; the building is clearly dated and in need of improvement works and sadly the state of the building does not give a good first impression.

■ added that she appreciated there are space constraints in the BRF, but that she was dismayed to see that xenopus and cat sharks were being housed in the same room. ■ said that in her view, this poses a biosecurity hazard in regards to possible water splashes or tank spills. ■ also noted that in the fish rooms, the fire doors are not soft close and often slam. ■ said that from an animal welfare perspective this could be stressful for the fish, as vibrations causing a startle reaction in fish have been observed in studies.

[Action: ■ to speak to ■ in Security and Estates Facilities regarding a solution to the fire doors slamming.]

■ noted that the use of water restriction protocols in some studies was not optimal, and that more ethical alternatives should be sought such as conducting food preference studies, and then giving the animal a preferred food like peanut butter, as a reward.

[Action: ■ noted that ■ has been doing some work in this area, and has agreed to meet with him. ■ to invite ■ to attend a future AWERB meeting to give a presentation on this topic.]

■ had similar observations to ■, and noted that she had never encountered a snail colony in a research context before. ■ was similarly heartened to witness the good staff morale and added that a 'Culture of Care' was evident amongst the staff. ■ added that staff were going out of their way to implement refinements and improvements wherever possible.

■ added that it was eye-opening to witness first-hand the pressures and competing priorities of ■'s role, especially in regards to managing resources and funding and trying to accommodate researchers and their kit at short notice. ■ noted that this was less efficient than what she had experienced within industry. ■ reiterated ■'s concerns in regards to water restriction protocols and the tired appearance of the BRF.

The Chair and ■ thanked both lay members for attending the tour, and their candid observations and suggestions. ■ added that it is hoped that there may be some additional funding available in the future to improve the BRF building within the next 2 years. To date,

£1million has been spent on 'critical points of failure' within the BRF, this has been spent on replacing all doors and new cage wash machines etc. However, further work on the BRF is needed such as internet data cabling and new fire alarms.

6. Named Animal Care and Welfare and Biomedical Facility Manager Updates (AWERB/69/03)

- 6.1 The AWERB **RECEIVED** the updates from the Biomedical Facility Manager. In regards to licences, we have received and approved 2 PPL amendments and one new PPL application, which was a continuation of a previous study.

Regarding the proposed Home Office Change Programme, there continues to be negative comments and backlash regarding the changes from the industry. As a result of this, a meeting with key cross-sector colleagues and [REDACTED] was sought to address these concerns.

New scrub sinks, floors, trolleys, and adjustable surgery tables have been purchased. Regarding light cycles in some of the rooms, [REDACTED] has requested a dimmer switch be installed to ensure appropriate light cycles for the animals.

In regards to personnel, our Senior Fish Tech will be leaving later this month. The role is currently being covered by various trained staff on a rotational basis. A newly appointed Animal Technician also has experience working with fish. [REDACTED] said that there have been issues with staffing levels recently due to staff sickness.

Regarding training, the NTCO, [REDACTED] has assessed 12 colleagues as competent to train, and 1 as competent to assess. [REDACTED] thanked [REDACTED] for her hard work whilst working under difficult circumstances.

[REDACTED] said that there has been discussion regarding the possibility of some Sussex Neuroscience students having a rotation at the BRF. However, there are a number of associated costs which this would entail, in regards to Home Office licencing etc. and it is not yet clear who would be responsible for these costs. It was also noted that this would also increase pressure on staff in regards to training and inducting these students. **[Action: [REDACTED] to discuss this with relevant School course leaders.]**

7. AWERB Webpages Update (AWERB/69/04)

- 7.1 The AWERB **RECEIVED** a verbal update on progress with the external and internal webpages from the AWERB Secretary. [REDACTED] gave a brief overview to the AWERB; a number of updates have been made to the internal webpages, there is now the following additional sections; Case Studies, Useful links and Key Documents, News, Events and Training Opportunities and Cross-Sector working. [REDACTED] said that she updates the internal webpages on a regular basis with up to date training opportunities and any other noteworthy updates.

Unfortunately, however, the external webpages are not managed by [REDACTED], but are managed by

the Digital Communications Team. Therefore, any requests for changes must go via the Digital Comms Team. [REDACTED] has been developing Case Studies to feature on a sub-page of the external webpages to provide context to the animal usage figures. [REDACTED] has been in touch with the Digital Comms Team to explain our requirements and has a meeting scheduled with them to discuss this in further detail.

[Action: It was noted that in regards to the Case Studies it would be useful to have a clear 'Benefits' subtitle as part of each one, to make it plain how these studies further scientific understanding. [REDACTED] to incorporate this into the next draft of the Case Studies.]

PART III – MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

8. Understanding Animals in Research Concordat Annual Survey Response (AWERB/69/05)

8.1 The AWERB **NOTED** the UAR survey response.

9. Concordat on Openness in Animal Research Action Plan (AWERB/69/06)

9.1 The AWERB **NOTED** the COAR Action Plan.

PART IV – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10. Dates of future meetings

- Wednesday 14 September 2022: 1-3pm, MS Teams
- Wednesday 18 January 2023: 1-3pm, MS Teams
- Wednesday 22 March 2023: 1-3pm, MS Teams
- Wednesday 14 June 2023: 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]
 - [REDACTED]
- Project Licence Holders representative: [REDACTED]
- Personal Licence Holders representative: [REDACTED]

- School of Psychology representative: [REDACTED]
- Brighton and Sussex Medical School representative: [REDACTED]
- Member: [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.)
- Research Governance Officer: [REDACTED]
- Secretary to the AWERB: [REDACTED]

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