

AWERB Minutes September 2023 meeting

The University of Edinburgh
Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body
Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986



Minutes of the meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body on **Tuesday 26th September 10am**

1. **Introductions, Apologies for absence and Approval of minutes**

Minutes: approved. Apologies from CR

2. **Matters Arising**

3. **Presentation: overseas research proposal OS10-23**

Presentation gave further background on the unmet clinical need and further justification for the proposed work. Applicant responded to the questions raised in the previous AWERB. Discussion and conclusion is minuted later under Agenda point 6: Overseas research application OS10-23.

4a. **To consider and advise the Establishment licence holder (PEL) on new Project licence Applications**

PL 19-23

Licence application not approved – the committee asks that the applicant reduces the number of models and procedures in the licence, and focuses on those to be conducted first. They are to return an outline plan to AWERB detailing which parts are to be taken out, and then respond to each comment previously raised, as well as the following, in full.

- Particular care should be taken to provide full justification for each model required.
- Severe humane endpoints should be removed or refined and wording around endpoints must be carefully thought through.
- Every instance of scoring systems must be tailored to each model.
- Routes of administration must be tailored to the protocol/procedure.
- NTS: description of procedures is far too detailed (technical?) for an NTS.

PL 26-23

The committee approves this project subject to the applicant addressing following points

- Adverse effects are missing in places and should be added
- Some cumulative effects haven't been considered
- NTS does not match licence application

PL 28-23

Application granted subject to the applicant addressing the following points

- Applicant needs to provide justification for use of GM rats and mice
- Many behavioural tests listed with administration of substances, but not enough justification included
- Animal experience needs more detail, ie an order of tests. A flow diagram is required.
- Need to address which species will be used for which tests, not all behavioural tests listed a suitable for both species.
- Humane endpoints and adverse effects require more detail and definition. Pain scales also need work.
- Protocol 3 – applicant needs to specify timescale and order of the proposed work, otherwise the full and cumulative effects on the animal are difficult to judge

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Additional availability application: A68-23

- Licence has been approved in previous establishment, but applicant will be moving to Edinburgh and hopes to work under this licence.
- The committee is unable to grant additional availability given that many of the procedures do not match University of Edinburgh guidelines, including routes of administration, aging, lack of mention of analgesia.
- A meeting will be scheduled with the applicant to discuss which of the protocols they intend to use here, and the application will return to a future AWERB to potentially grant limited additional availability for only the required protocols.

4b. Amendments – for consideration by full committee: Amendment A59-23

- Amendment involves severe procedures, including some refinements. As such it will be discussed at the next AWERB meeting when the NVS involved is able to be present.

Applications submitted and considered by the amendment Sub-Committee

**Approved:
A58-23, A63-23, A71-23**

5. Updates to the AWERB:

a) BVS director update to the committee

- There is an upcoming conference (28/9/23) on natural behaviour in large animals. Registration now closed with 109 registration, however a few spots have become available.
 - 5th anniversary of BVS approaches, celebrations to be held on 27/9/23
 - Progress on the new 3Rs centre continues, the lead NVS on this project is meeting with a European 3Rs centre
 - [REDACTED] moving animals to [REDACTED] A study group is being set up to coordinate the moving process.
 - Analgesia and pain meeting is scheduled for December.
 - Strategic plan for 2024-2034L staff survey sent and have had an 88% response rate. Scientist survey will be conducted next year. Analysis of staff survey ongoing, results will be presented on 5th December.
 - BVS Director is in discussions with PELh and AWERB committee members about statistical support for all PPL applications coming to AWERB. There is budget available for this. Currently exploring options for how this would work, with a potential pilot project to support future PPL applications. The committee discussed this idea, the Director will submit a document outlining how this would work, proposing where and what interventions/services are being offered, and how AWERB fits in to this.
 - Given that there is a concern that scheduling of HO audits doesn't appear to be happening on a risk-based approach at present, an internal audit system is proposed, run through the AWERB. The committee discussed the benefits challenges of this idea, particularly given the extra time it would require of the AWERB committee members. A written proposal will be brought to a future AWERB.
 - BVS Director is preparing a document looking at how to appropriately describe animal research in various different publication types. This will be brought to a future AWERB.
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b) BVS Deputy director update to the committee

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- Recruitment: modern apprentices – trialling bringing in modern apprentices to see a facility prior to interview. Seven were invited, however no one came. This will be trialled again.
 - Advertising for Senior Facility Manager for [REDACTED]. 16 applicants already, closes next week
 - 16 people came from [REDACTED] for a visit, a tour of facilities and talks. Showcasing non-aversive capture, rehoming program etc.
 - BVS is sponsoring a senior tech to do part time open learning MSc in Biomedical Science with another university.
 - [REDACTED], no indication on when that might happen though the predicted timeline will certainly not be met
 - The new [REDACTED] cage wash is now functioning.
- c) NVS update to the committee**
- Consider greater controls for imaging of ZF specifically at pre-protected stages.
 - There were a number of SC18s in September, all of which were reported to ASRU.
 - Technicians raised the issue of colony management. PPLh acknowledged it was a lack of oversight. PPLh has discussed this with the wider lab to prevent this happening again, as well as the importance of good and timely communication with techs.
 - Rehoming of animals program going well. 14 rats rehomed to high quality homes. Two more to be rehomed today. [REDACTED] presenting at other Establishments about tamoxifen administration refinements led by us and supported by AWERB.
- d) NACWO update to the committee**
- After previous [REDACTED] incidents there has been a retraining drive in which 76 people were retrained and reassessed. 33 people had their access to zebrafish tanks revoked, these either didn't require access or didn't respond to communications. Review (with no adverse effects on fish) found that errors may still occur. An enhanced training program is being considered in response.
- e) NTCO update to the committee**
- PIL courses now running, 61 people on courses this week. Finances will go through [REDACTED] by November
 - A new 12 week training program for new technicians has begun. They'll be based in [REDACTED] initially, then to KB to work alongside technicians there, then after training they move to their destination facility. This will ensure consistency and standardisation overall
 - Members of the University including the NTCO attended the Universities Training Group training day in [REDACTED]. There were presentations on competency assessments in different establishments. It was reassuring that Establishments across the UK are performing competency assessments similarly. There were also presentations on making training inclusive for everyone.
- f) HOLC update to the committee**
- HOLTIF meeting of HOLC community and Home office Inspectors. There were discussions about movement of ASRU to DSIT. Licence assessment period is 40 days, however Establishments are reporting the HO are in some instance extending the assessment period by 15 days
 - Some Establishments have reported high levels of stress amongst their community because of lack of response by HO to SC18s. Keep alive requests are responded to, however in some cases the delay is unacceptable.
- g) BVS Deputy Director (Vets/home office) Roslin AWERB report**
- Non-compliance reported after an unauthorised procedure. NTCO and NVS have been involved in the response. They have encouraged staff in unit to go back to project licence if staff in unit aren't sure of correct protocol.
 - A new NVS has accepted job offer.
 - PIL administrator recruitment continues

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- Roslin AWERB report: ethical assessment challenge around a company proposing to work in LARIF with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]
Discussions around the difficulty of conducting harm/benefit analysis when the potential benefits would be specific to individual studies, which are not currently described in detail in the application..

6. Overseas research application [REDACTED] OS10-23.

The committee felt a number of concerns remained despite the applicant's presentation and Question and answer session.

Action point: the committee proposed sending a letter to the applicant to cover the following points:

- [REDACTED] The AWERB committee does not give its approval for the overseas work to go ahead, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- Concerns remain over
 - the scientific justification for the proposed experiments
 - the establishment chosen to perform the experiments, specifically concerns relating to housing and accommodation and procedural issues.
 - Benefits to the wider population as a whole

7. Retrospective Review

- A comprehensive review. Committee raised the question of whether standard condition 18s should be discussed in retrospective reviews – it was felt that in the interests of openness this is a good idea.
- Some experiments reported that were ultimately not published due to another lab publishing first – the committee wondered whether these some or all of these results could be published anyway

8. A.O.C.B

Technicians' week awards: [REDACTED] won the award for Education and Training out of 600 nominations.

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Date of next meeting: October 31st via MS Teams