



## London AWERB Hub Meeting

7th October 2020

[Meeting conducted online]

### Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020, were approved and authorised for publication on members' websites.

### Matters Arising

The second training workshop for AWERB members is on hold due to the ongoing Covid 19 outbreak.

### Report from NC3Rs Manager

[XX] drew attention to the new breeding and colony management resource on the NC3Rs' website. It was designed to apply best practice when resuming research activity following lockdown. The resource can be found at <https://nc3rs.org.uk/breeding-and-colony-management>

Another resource was the new *3Rs advice for project licence applicants* section of the NC3Rs website. This guidance was penned by Regional Programme Managers, based on their experience of working with PPL applicants. The guidance is located at <https://nc3rs.org.uk/3rs-advice-project-licence-applicants>

A number of new e-learning modules had also been added to the website. These were made in conjunction with FLAIRE Learning <https://nc3rs.org.uk/e-learning-resources>

The Pan-London 3Rs symposium was originally planned to take place in April 2020. The decision had just been made to move to an online presentation, with details still being worked on. **ACTION:** [XX] to pass on details of a recent [XXXX] symposium.

### Update on the Forced Swim Test

[XXX] reported that [XXXXX] 3Rs Committee has compiled a list of actively discouraged procedures, which would state that the FST could not be used as a model of depression, but is acceptable as a behavioural screen to test new compounds for their potential use as antidepressants. UAR are working on a fact sheet to outline where the test is used and what it is useful for. The document should be published in the near future.

[Note added to Minutes: The factsheet has now been published on the UAR website: <https://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/search-results#e=external&q=Forced>]

## **Harm Benefit Analysis: Guidelines for AWERBS**

The ASC published their review of the harm/benefit analysis (HBA) process in 2017.. The formal HBA process is the responsibility of the ASRU Inspectorate. However AWERBs carry out their own provisional HBAs as part of their review of PPL applications. A summary of the aspects of the HBA process that might be helpful to AWERBS has been assembled and will soon be published on the ASC website.

## **COVID Experiences: Successes and Problems**

At the last meeting, business continuity plans had been the main focus. However, the landscape had changed significantly since then. The Hub shared some 'tips' that were helpful in dealing with the COVID-19 crisis:

[XXXXXXXX] had extended their WhatsApp network, to improve communication in staff movements and attendance.

[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] didn't close its animal facilities completely, although breeding activity was reduced. Measures, including contact tracing, should help reduce the likelihood of a full closedown in the future.

[XXXX] had husbandry staff living on site during the lockdown to ensure continuity.

[XXX] management structure had changed to allow rapid high-level decisions. A phased plan was put in place, to ensure the community would be aware of future changes. Car parking and student accommodation were made available to husbandry staff, to avoid them having to use public transport.

[XXXXXXXXXXXX] avoided staff travelling during peak hours. They also drew attention to the LASA document for reviewing the Covid experience:

<https://www.lasa.co.uk/document-designed-to-aid-awerb-review-of-lessons-learnt-from-the-covid19-experience/>

[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX]'s AWERB reviewed return to work plans. Provisions were made for staff with long commutes or childcare concerns. Breeding colonies were cryopreserved or put on tick-over, as appropriate.

[XXX] continuity plans and crisis management teams were set up. As a multinational company, pressure was felt from areas with differing restrictions.

[XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX] had staff working in separate shifts to allow bubbles. Licenced technicians completed studies where possible. The emotional strain on staff caused by the number of animals culled was acknowledged.

Anecdotal evidence was reported of researchers being wary of starting long studies with the prospect of another lockdown looming. Remote access to HOI and NVSs had been a boon.

## **Transport during Covid**

Few issues of transporting animals had been experienced, once it was made known that they were for medical research. Developments in gel and food packs seem to enable longer journey times, but care should be taken not to allow conditions that wouldn't have been acceptable previously.

China is no longer exporting NHPs for use in research.

A reminder was given that transport of gametes is preferable to live exports.

### **Alternatives to Caesium Irradiators**

[XX] reported on the concerns about the use of Caesium 137 in irradiators, as outlined in Paper 1. The isotope has the potential of terrorist misappropriation if not disposed of correctly, due to its moderate half-life and high energy decay. X-ray emitters or cobalt 60 are possible alternatives, but not full replacements.

### **Horseshoe Crabs**

[XX] reported on the use of horseshoe crab blood in endotoxin tests, see Paper 2. Bleeding crabs is not a terminal procedure, but it is unclear what proportion of released animals survive. 500,000 crabs were used for this purpose in 2018, and are overlooked in legislation and protections.

### **Brexit Matters**

Many establishments reported that the ongoing Covid situation had depleted stockpiles of PPE intended to cover any disruption to supply caused by Brexit.

### **ASC Activities Report**

Project licences for the production of antibodies should only be granted with robust justification. Synthetic production should first be considered.

The ASC currently reviews PPL applications to carry out work that is potentially controversial, including those using NHPs. A report on the ASC licence review process, which includes several recommendations, has been published on the ASC website ([https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/922256/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Licence\\_Analysis\\_Subgroup.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/922256/Report_of_the_Licence_Analysis_Subgroup.pdf)). In the future, a more general cross-section of applications will be seen.

A review of policy on "reanimation" or 'organoids' is planned.

This year's AWERB Hub Chairs workshop is to be held within a couple of weeks..

Clarification has been requested on the requirement for animal testing of materials only used in cosmetics.

### **Any Other Business**

This was the last meeting chaired by [XXX]. [XX] at [King's College] will take the position of Chair for the next three years.

### **Date of next Meeting**

The exact date of the next meeting, most likely in February 2021, will be announced in due course.