
Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 13 December 2018 at 10am

Present

Attendees: 12 members, 1 in attendance, 3 by invitation, 4 apologies

1 PROJECT LICENCE AMENDMENT: DISCUSSION WITH PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER

The Project Licence Holder was welcomed to the meeting.

The Project Licence Holder reminded the meeting that she had previously applied for an amendment to her project licence. The intention had been to introduce a valproic acid (VPA) model however it had not been possible to obtain the required animals. It had therefore been decided that an application for a breeding licence be made for this breeding model.

AWERB confirmed that they were happy with the proposed amendment and for it to be submitted to the Home Office for approval.

2 NVS REPORT

AWERB noted the NVS report. The issue of a pig having to be euthanased as it was showing non-specific abnormal behaviour (lethargy and abdominal pain at palpation) was discussed. The animal had not displayed any other clinical signs. AWERB discussed what could have caused the reaction. Was it a result of being handled too much? There had been 6 pigs involved in the study but only this one had got shown this reaction. Care had been taken to ensure that the pigs were comfortable with them being given treats and time being spent with them. Each pig had a record which detailed their reactions to the training, what they had done that day and whether bloods had been taken or just been given treats.

A query was raised about how the animals were bought onto the study. This would be checked with the project licence holder and whether they were all from the same litter.

3 PROJECT LICENCE AMENDMENT: DISCUSSION WITH PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER:

AWERB were advised that the purpose of this project licence was to enable clinical trials with animals with naturally occurring disease (veterinary patients – client owned).

The requested amendments were:

- To change the alternative contact on the licence
- Allow blood samples to be taken from horses for validation and control purposes for in vitro or laboratory analyses.
- To add some new protocols:
 - 1st protocol was to pilot a new treatment to Dobermans to give stem cells by intravenous injections on a monthly basis. The condition the dogs suffered from meant they generally only had a median life expectancy of 3 months. This treatment might improve the quality of their lives.

- The aim of the 2nd protocol was to describe the pharmacokinetics of Amox/clav in critically ill/surgical dogs. This study would provide the basis for dose and dosing interval adjustment in critical conditions to assure efficacy of antibiotics and the best outcome for patients
- The aim of the 3rd protocol was a pilot study to test the safety and feasibility of autologous intraspinal transplantation of mucosal olfactory ensheathing cells transduced to express chondroitinase in 5 chronically paraplegic dogs resulting from spinal cord injury.

AWERB asked to see copies of the consent form for these studies, to check that it made it clear to the pet owners what the protocols were for and what was involved and that the owners could remove their animals from the study at any time.

4 ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT AUDIT WORKING GROUP

As it was a year since the environmental enrichment audit had been carried out, AWERB had requested that an update be provided.

For Camden the following updates were reported:

- Guinea pigs: now socially housed and trained to use litter trays
- Rabbits: currently individually housed but aim was to house new rabbits in groups. The pens were due to be reconfigured shortly.
- Floor pens: these were a temporary measure to see how the animals settled in to use floor pens. As good feedback had been reported with there being a full range of natural behaviour the intention was to make this a permanent fixture in the room.
- Rodents were now housed in a bigger style cages. It was noted that they were now voluntarily coming over to the technicians to interact with them. This was seen as positive interaction rather than being a stress/defence technique as they were not approaching people aggressively. The rodents were being handled twice a week by the technicians plus different objects were being introduced to them such as cable ties to play with. The rodents were being played with and given attention rather than just being taken straight into class.
- Hamsters: these were all now housed in double decker cages (as were some mice).
- Handling: technicians have switched to tunnel handling. This had been done in conjunction with the NC3Rs and the work they had done on promoting tunnel handling. Three technicians had attended an NC3Rs seminar. This resulted in the Rodent Handling Group being set up where it was decided to trial the cupping and tunnel handling methods, as opposed to using the tail handling method. The Unit (technicians and NVS) had been praised by the Society of Biology for teaching both the cupping and tunnel handling methods, when the unit was being assessed as part of the reaccreditation process for the courses.
- Mice: all mice had paper wool to use as nesting materials, however this had made it difficult to see the mice. Nestlets had subsequently been obtained. They were manufactured from pulped virgin cotton fibre. Bedding was used with the nestlets as it had been found that nude mice could not tolerate nestlets so using them should be reviewed on an individual strain basis.
- A protocol had been rolled out that set out every item that needed to be incorporated in the rodent floor. Before providing environmental enrichment items, the suggestions were discussed with the project licence holders first to make sure that they would not affect the study.
- The aim was to rotate environment where possible and to monitor the frequency of when novel enrichment was introduced as it was important not to overload cages with enrichment as it was important to ensure that animals had enough space to have their own areas.

- Ferrets: training ferrets have hammocks that they could pull nesting into. Those that were on study had boxes they could nest in.
- Cows and ponies: new fixed matting had been put in; the ponies also have a food ball.
- Pigs: these were receiving additional handling with treats.

The information for Hawkshead was still being obtained. An update would be provided at a future AWERB meeting.

2 students have signed up to do the enrichment projects that were on offer. They would be looking at pigs, mice and zebrafish.

5 END OF LICENCE REVIEW

AWERB noted the end of licence review that had been submitted for a project licence that had now expired.

6 ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE

AWERB noted the amendments that had been made to the Establishment Licence, namely:

- Addition of a new NTCO.
- Addition of rooms to the Establishment Licence for microscope work and fume hoods

7 PROJECT LICENCE AMENDMENTS

AWERB noted that one project licence amendment had been approved by the Home Office since the previous meeting.

8 MINUTES OF MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2018 were agreed as an accurate record.

9 MATTERS ARISING

9.1 Item 4.1 Poster for AWERB Hub Workshop (October 2018 meeting)

Details of the size of the poster boards would be obtained so that a decision could be made on the format of the poster.

9.2 Item 9.1: Rehoming (August 2018 meeting)

The animal technicians would do an update to AWERB at either the January or February 2019 meeting.

9.3 Item 9.2: Attending other AWERB meeting (July 2018 meeting)

The Chair of the AWERB Hub had circulated a reminder to see if there was interest in attending other AWERB meetings.

9.4 Item 2: Mid term and end of project licence reviews (June 2018 meeting)

Several options for these reviews would be circulated for decision about which one should be used.

9.5 Item 4: ARRIVE guidelines (June 2018 meeting)

The draft ARRIVE template would be trialled in the new year with a couple of new studies that were being run.

9.6 Item 6.7: Virtual tour of BSU (June 2018 meeting)

This had nearly been completed. A decision was needed on what platform should be used to host the virtual tour. Once this had been sorted a copy would be shown at a forthcoming AWERB meeting.

10 UAR AWARD.

The RVC won the Media Engagement Award at the fifth annual Understanding Animal Research Openness Awards held at the beginning of December. The award was won for our work on Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) and subsequent sharing of this research with the media.

11 SCHEDULE 1 REGISTER REVIEW

It was suggested that the schedule 1 register be transferred from the current excel spreadsheet to an access database. There were several external companies that provided programmes that were aimed for training and schedule 1 registers. Prices would be obtained. The focus would be on making this more of a living document so that it could be reviewed on a more active basis.

Secretary

7 January 2019