
Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: Tuesday 18 February at 3pm

Present

Attendees: 10, plus 2 in attendance, 3 by invitation and 6 apologies.

1 WELCOME

Three technicians were welcomed to the meeting. They were attending to provide input into item 2, with one of them attending the rest of the meeting as an observer.

2 DMD DOGS AND THE DURATION THAT BITCHES CAN BE KEPT IN THE BREEDING COLONY

AWERB's opinion was being sought on how long the bitches in the breeding colony should be kept, before recommending that they be rehomed. There was no maximum age specified in the project licence for when the dogs should be rehomed. There was currently no recommended guidance on how long bitches should be kept for breeding however the older they got the higher the risk of problems with pregnancy and whelping becomes. There was also the risk of becoming institutionalised the longer they remained in the colony. Practical issues such as dogs becoming more expensive or impossible to insure when older also needed to be considered.

After discussion it was decided that guidelines should be issued providing advice on when a dog should be considered for rehoming.

The things to consider were:

- Age of dog – they should be kept no longer than 5 years
- Number of times they have had litters.
- Behaviour.

A request for breeding form should be created as well as a standard policy to make it easier for decisions to be made without there being arguments.

The current composition of the breeding colony should be reviewed setting out the ages of the bitches and how many times they had been bred. A scoring system should then be set up with scores allocated depending on how many litters; age and if there were any behavioural changes. If a dog scored higher than a certain level then this would mean the dog should be rehomed.

It was agreed that the animal technicians along with the NVS should meet to discuss the proposed selection process, which would then be reviewed by AWERB. A review of the colony would also be done so that it could be identified when new bitches should be bought in to replace those dogs that should be retired. By planning ahead it would mean the colony would constantly be refreshed.

3 PRESENTATION FROM PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER

A project licence amendment application had been received and a representative of the project licence holder was attending the meeting to discuss the amendment and to also provide an update on how the project licence was progressing.

AWERB were reminded that the aim of this project was to design a new intelligent neuroprosthesis and demonstrate that it can monitor bladder fullness during routine activities. This was an important method to improve the quality of life of patients by providing an attractive alternative to sterile catheterisation whilst at the same time reducing the lifetime cost of care.

They were requesting changes to the project licence because:

1. They would like to use an axonal tracer injected into the bladder wall to further characterise (on histology *post-mortem*) the sensory afferents that were present in the sacral roots from which they were recording. By more accurately determining the number and distribution of these bladder afferents would enable better comparison to, and therefore validation of, our neural recordings.
2. They would like to obtain baseline cystometry measures under general anaesthesia alone, to provide additional controls for the effect of general anaesthesia alone on bladder pressure and volume during cystometry.
3. They would like to perform rhizotomy of the sacral roots (under general anaesthesia in non-recovery animals only) above and below the site of nerve recording as a control to further demonstrate their recordings were specific to neural signals within the isolated nerve and that these disappeared after nerve section.
4. For Protocol 3, they wanted to increase animal numbers to strengthen their data, following positive findings they have now obtained. Reproducing results would lead to statistical significance, and demonstration of efficacy. A query was raised whether the aim was to validate the results or to analyse the data altogether. AWERB were advised that it was for statistical significance to see if the same pattern continued.

The project licence holder deputy was thanked for attending the meeting and was informed that the amendment would be discussed further by the Committee and a decision then made.

The Committee agreed that they had been very impressed with the results of the project so far in particular the team's very careful planning and their examination of the results of their work so far before deciding what the next steps should be. They were pleased to note that the intention was to continue working with one animal at a time as that was a nice way to validate their results and to show proof of principle that their results could be reproduced.

The Committee approved this amendment.

4 NVS REPORT

The NVS reported on several veterinary health issues that had been encountered in the units. Overall though he was satisfied with the welfare of the animals.

5 NACWO REPORT

5.1 Camden

There had been several instances of not following best practice (tail handling of rats and issues over anaesthesia) that had been identified being carried out by a group who used the unit for their project licence work. This had been raised with the project licence holder and retraining sessions scheduled for the personal licence holders. Two sessions had been arranged: one on anaesthesia and one on best handling training.

5.2 Hawkshead

Dog colony: AWERB were informed that a last minute request had been received to breed one of the bitches with a new stud dog that had been on site for only 36 hours so had not been given proper opportunity to acclimatise to his new environment. There had been discussions about the pros/cons of mating at this time between the NVS, NACWOs and project licence holder. The decision was taken to go ahead with the breeding as a delay would have resulted in a further delay to being able to rehome the bitch. The mating went well with no complications. However the technicians had been concerned about this decision and the need to make it at very short notice. It had therefore been agreed that a “request for mating” form should be produced in order to try to reduce the risk of a recurrence. AWERB recognised that technicians and the NVS and NACWOs were constantly put under pressure in order to balance the requirements of the research with the welfare of the animals hence the importance of being transparent about how decisions were made. It was also important that the animal technicians had confidence that they could bring their concerns to AWERB and know that they would be supported.

6 3RS

6.1 NC3Rs training course

It was reported that a NC3Rs training course for technicians had been arranged for 27th February. This was in relation to blinding and randomisation and should help the technicians facilitate the research they were involved in.

6.2 Tissue sharing network

A discussion was held about this as one of the technicians had attended a session on this. It was confirmed that the College had a tissue sharing bank. More institutes were getting in about sharing tissues.

AWERB were reminded that they had received in 2016 a presentation from an external person who had designed a web and mobile application to enable research teams to optimize the use of laboratory animals by sharing organs and tissues that would otherwise be discarded. It was thought though that they had not been successful in obtaining funding so the tool had not really taken off. This however should be looked into further.

7 REPORT BACK FROM MEETINGS ATTENDED

7.1 ISAE Nordic-Baltic Winter meeting, Tartu, 28-3- January 2020:

It was reported that at this meeting the European Network of 3 Centres had been discussed in particular the design of animal studies and increasing their reproducibility.

8 CONDITION 18 REPORT

One condition 18 report had been submitted to the Home Office Inspector directly by a project licence holder. The HOI had advised though that this was not actually a condition 18, as it was most

unlikely that the deterioration in the animal and subsequent euthanasia had been caused by the regulated procedure.

AWERB were concerned to hear that the condition 18 had been submitted directly to the Home Office by the project licence holder. It was agreed that all PPL and PIL holders would be reminded of the process.

9 STUDY REQUESTS APPROVED SINCE THE LAST AWERB MEETING

AWERB noted that there had been one study request approved since the previous meeting.

10 END OF PROJECT LICENCE REVIEW

One end of project licence review had been reviewed. The information provided on the project licence had been very sparse. This was due to the project licence holder only taking over the licence towards the end of its cycle as the previous project licence holder had left. Attempts had been made to contact the previous project licence holder to see if she could contribute to the report but there had been no response.

11 TRAINING RECORDS

AWERB reviewed training records for one personal licence holder based at Camden and one at Hawkshead. The training records in Camden and Hawkshead were very different. The intention was to standardise the approach to training records in terms of layout.

12 NOTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2020 were confirmed to be an accurate record.

13 MATTERS ARISING

13.1 Item 13: Report 2 (end of PPL review) – January 2020 meeting

Following an e-mail discussion and advice from the NC3Rs regional programme manager, the project licence holder had amended his report to incorporate answers to the 3Rs questions.

13.2 Item 13: Report 3 (end of PPL review) – January 2020 meeting

The project licence holder had confirmed that he was happy to do a small feature on this project for the RVC website.

13.3 Item 4: BSU Virtual Tour (October 2019 meeting)

The original person who had started doing the work on the BSU virtual tour had been in contact. He however had not yet been approved by Finance as a supplier so could not yet get paid.

13.4 Item 15: training records (November 2019 meeting)

AWERB were now receiving training records of two people selected at random for review as part of the quarterly review process.

14 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 10th March 2020 at 3pm.

Secretary
19 February 2020