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**Summary Minutes:** AWERB - Standard agenda items meeting

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**Status:** Chair approved

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**Meeting held:** 11 February 2021 at 12.30pm via MS Teams

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**Present**

Attendees: 10, 1 by invitation and 6 apologies

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**1 WELCOME**

The Chair thanked AWERB for attending these additional agenda item meetings, which had been recently arranged. She had been concerned that with the number of project licence reviews that AWERB were doing, the standard agenda items frequently ended up being deferred as there was not enough time at the meeting to discuss them. These items were just as important as PPL reviews so it had been decided to trial having meetings that would just be dedicated to these. She really appreciated the time and effort that was spent on AWERB work.

**2 3RS**

**2.1 Breeding and Colony Management**

NC3Rs have produced a new, extensive resource on breeding and colony management which includes best practice concepts along with practical solutions for the colony management challenges that staff might face relating to the management of genetically altered mice colonies after the significant interruption enforced by lockdown. A joint webinar was being held with the MRC Harwell Institute on 1 March which would be exploring how to address these common challenges.

It had previously been agreed that it would be useful to have a discussion group set up at the RVC to discuss these challenges and it was suggested that this webinar would be a nice introduction for the discussion group (it could either be viewed live but would also be recorded). A query was raised whether the discussion group would be a one-off discussion? It would all depend on how the discussions actually went and what came out of them and whether there were any follow up actions on improvements that could be made. It was planned for there to be a report provided to AWERB, after the discussion group and webinar, perhaps by one of the attendees.

Having best practice concepts would help make better models so resulting in better science, which scientists should be keen on. The Chair added that the breeding aspects could get neglected as the emphasis was generally on procedures, so this was a good way to rectify that.

Details of the webinar would be circulated to all researchers and technicians in case they were interested in attending.

**2.2 International 3Rs prize**

This annual prize was now open for applications from anyone who had published an outstanding paper with demonstrable 3Rs impact in the past 3 years. The deadline to apply was 4pm on 3 March.

### 2.3 Pan-London 3Rs symposium 3-4 March 2021

Details of the above symposium had been circulated, where researchers and animal technicians were invited to showcase their 3Rs initiatives. The symposium programme would take place across two half days and cover a range of topics, including advances in organ-on-a-chip and 3D organoid techniques, impact of environmental enrichment on mouse cancer models, the development of new technologies that can reduce animal use and improve welfare, the importance of good experimental design in developing new therapies, and harnessing big data to advance the 3Rs. There was also a poster competition, consisting of three minute videos, from which 6 candidates would be shortlisted for people to view and vote on the day for their favourite.

People could register up to 26 February 2021. Several people from the RVC had already signed up and submitted abstracts but it was hoped that more would sign up.

### 2.4 New NC3Rs research culture and 3Rs hub

The NC3Rs have produced a range of resources for institutions to use to improve or strengthen their research culture. It was a lot of things that AWERB would be familiar with - experimental design and reporting, reproducibility, open research and communication and promoting a culture of care – but categorised in a way that demonstrated how the 3Rs contributed to research culture and was closely entwined. Research culture was really key at the moment and seeing how 3Rs fitted was quite nice. This hub would be flagged to the research and reproducibility community.

### 2.5 Skin swabbing versus Fin clipping

A paper recently published in [Scientific Reports](#) demonstrated that skin swabbing provided a less invasive method of DNA collection from small laboratory fish than the commonly used method of fin clipping, with the potential to have a wide impact upon fish health and welfare. This research had been funded by an NC3Rs project grant. It was an interesting paper as it provided a direct comparison of the two different techniques.

Although skin swabbing was generally used at the RVC there were still some researchers who used the fin clipping technique out of habit, although they were being encouraged to move over to skin swabbing. A copy of this paper should be circulated to the fish users to highlight that skin swabbing resulted in better welfare for the fish. It was very difficult to do refinements for fish but this was definitely one that could be done to improve things.

## 3 RSPCA SCIENTIST-AWERB ENGAGEMENT: REVIEW SECTION ON DOS AND DON'TS FOR AWERB MEMBERS:

Two of the AWERB members had reviewed this document together. Their general consensus was that the College adhered to the “dos and don'ts quite well”. They did have the following suggestions though in relation to the project licence reviews at the meetings:

- AWERB members to introduce themselves and to explain what their role on the Committee was to the project licence holder, particularly when the project licence holder was external to the organisation. It was agreed that this would be trialled.
- A list of AWERB members with a brief biography could also be provided to the project licence holder in advance of the meeting.
- Ensure that positive feedback was also provided to the project licence holders as that would help make writing the project licence a more positive experience
- Communications back to the project licence holder after the meetings could be done in a more uniform way by having a proforma comments form. This would make it easier to review the comments.

The following comment was also noted:

- Ensuring that there was enough time in the meetings to cover all the agenda items. This was a problem that this AWERB had encountered, hence why the decision had been made to trial having fortnightly meetings that focused on different aspects of the AWERB remit.

#### **4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

#### **5 ACTION LOG**

##### **5.1 Item 2: Update on Camden ponies (26 January 2021 meeting)**

A contact at Equine had been identified to speak to about how they sourced their teaching ponies.

##### **5.2 Item 3: New PPL application (26 January 2021 meeting)**

The Home Office Inspector's advice on whether to specify volumes and frequencies in project licences had been sought. He did not have a definitive answer but would look at the guidance. He was, however, happy with how the RVC currently handled this. AWERB's input was therefore being sought on this. The Chair's view was that if upon considering the licence AWERB felt the volumes and frequencies should be added, as it might have a welfare impact, then this should be done. Another member advised that his preference was that there be enough information provided that enabled a harm benefit analysis to be done. There could be a large difference between the minimum and the maximum end of the spectrum so this needed to be taken into account by AWERB when doing the project licence review. This should be reviewed on an individual basis by the AWERB and then a recommendation given on what to include. AWERB decided that this information should be included in the typical animal experience section at least. What some people might see as not impacting on animal welfare could be very different to others, so they could suggest quite high dosing volumes and frequencies thinking that was acceptable. There was no clear cut off if it was not specified in the licence.

##### **5.3 Item 4.3: Cardiac specialist talk: (26 January 2021 meeting)**

A copy of the talk had been circulated and also sent to technicians. The consensus was that it was really good and thorough.

##### **5.4 Item 7.4: Breeding and colony management resource: (9 December 2020 meeting)**

An e-mail had been drafted to send to the academics who were being invited to join the discussion group. A date would then be arranged.

##### **5.5 Item 5: Ring tailed lesions (11 November 2020 meeting)**

Following the delivery of rodents that already seemed to have signs of ring tail a non-compliance issue had been raised with the supplier.

The incidents of ring tail were coming down. In the interim rooms with racks were being used to prevent draughts going onto the animals; there was an ongoing monitoring of the BMS system and any fluctuations. There had been no more listed events. The situation would be monitored carefully and once the investigation had been completed a set of actions would be compiled to avoid this happening in the future.

##### **5.6 Item 3.7: Checklist for reviewing project licences (25 August 2020 meeting)**

This would be linked in with the proforma that was being created for providing feedback on project licences so that it was all integrated.

## 6 NACWO REPORTS

### 6.1 Camden

- **Anatomy pony:** One of the ponies was on medication for the laminitis/cushings disease combination seemed to be working. A recent blood sample had been taken which indicated that it was being well controlled on her current dose so she would be kept on that dose, with a follow up blood sample being taken in the autumn.
- **Anatomy pony:** The pony that had started to be “grumpy” during anatomy sessions was at Hawkshead and was being trialled for being used for equine teaching. She seemed to be very happy so far.
- **Spreadsheet:** A shared spreadsheet had been set up that listed all the vaccinations, wormings, veterinary appointments etc. for the large animals at Camden and Hawkshead so that the technicians had easy access to this information.
- **Temperature and humidity problems:** there were still problems being encountered with the BMS system. It was not known whether this had caused any of the problems with the ringtail lesions but a review of all the air flows in the building had been done. An initial report from those investigations had now been received. A meeting had been held with Estates to discuss the environmental systems in Camden to make sure they were maintained on a regular basis and looked after and were working at their optimum. Part of the problem was that the system was installed by a company that no longer existed so it was difficult to get parts and to find people with the expertise to get the system going again. It had been emphasised that there needed to be a clear maintenance plan for all these systems within the BSU buildings to ensure that they were being maintained on a regular basis so problems were not encountered and they were able to cope with the extreme weather conditions (rain/heat) that could be experienced.

## 7 NVS REPORT

- **Dog:** One of the dogs that had a cruciate ligament had been fostered following surgery. He had been recently re-examined and was much improved and had settled in well with his foster family. A more permanent home needed to be found for him though, but it needed to be with the right family as it was possible he could experience future problems with his other cruciate ligament.
- **Ferret surgeries:** following problems with some of the ferret surgeries, there had been some minor changes to the protocol made. The next batch of surgeries were scheduled for the following week so this would be reviewed to see how the surgeries went.
- **Ferret suppliers:** the current supplier of the ferrets was closing down so an alternative supplier needed to be identified. There were also discussions about what steps should be taken to ensure that the risk of disease between the new and current colony of ferrets was minimised.

## 8 ASSESSORS LIST REVIEW

AWERB reviewed the current assessors list. Several adjustments were needed.

It was agreed that all of the assessors on the list should be contacted to make sure they were still happy to be assessors and to check when they last carried out an assessment of the procedures allocated to them.

**9 MID TERM REVIEW**

AWERB noted the mid-term review. The researchers had not got the results they required from the work carried out so they had not continued with the study so there were very low animal numbers. A query would be raised whether this project licence was still required in its entirety.

AWERB noted that a publication from this work was in progress, however publication of negative results involving small numbers of animals was generally very difficult. If they did get this published then it would be nice to know which journal, so it was known that there was a journal willing to publish negative results studies in order to encourage the sharing of resources and knowledge and so other researchers were aware not to try this type of study.

**10 NEW PROJECT LICENCES GRANTED BY THE HOME OFFICE**

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

**11 CONDITION 18 REPORTS**

AWERB noted that two condition 18 reports had been submitted to the Home Office.

**12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**12.1 Meeting format**

AWERB were asked for their views on the new format of the meeting. The consensus was that it had worked well. By splitting the items it meant that time could be given to each item. In future time could also be spent on showcasing individual animal welfare projects and the work that technicians were doing.

**12.2 Date of next meeting**

This was scheduled for 23 February 2021 at 2pm and would be a PPL review meeting.

Secretary  
16 February 2021