
Minutes: AWERB summary minutes: PPL reviews meeting

Status: Final

Meeting held: Wednesday 23 March 2022 at 2pm via MS Teams

Present:

14 plus 1 in attendance, 4 by invitation and 6 apologies.

1 **NEW PPL APPLICATION TO ADD RVC AS SECONDARY AVAILABILITY TO A PROJECT LICENCE**

The project licence holder (PPL Holder) and colleague were welcomed to the meeting. They explained that they had been granted a project licence to replace an existing project licence that had secondary availability at the College. For this new licence two protocols would be carried out at the RVC. They needed secondary availability to do work on tissues for primary cell cultures.

The following comments/queries were made:

- *Breeding animals of specific ages was classed in the licence as a reduction method. Why was that?* The PPL holder explained that they needed a breeding licence as they found that as they required specific aged embryos, breeders were sending the embryos to them early to try and ensure correct gestation age but this resulted in a risk that they were not then at the right life so had to be culled. There was also a risk of animals being aborted whilst in transportation. By breeding the lines on site, the animals should be at the correct gestation stage, so less animals would need to be bred.
- *The breeding protocol mentioned that the body weight limit in terms of triggering a humane end point was 15%, but there was also mention that there would not be any adverse effects related to that. These did not match up.* The PPL Holder explained that this was to ensure consistency between the different protocols by maintaining cut off end points at 15%. However it was recognised that this was probably not applicable to this protocol as there would not be any body weight loss.
- *Specific anaesthetic codes for each of the routes should be provided.*
- *There were a lot of things mentioned under one of the protocols to be done at the RVC, which was actually work that would not be carried out at the RVC.* AWERB recommended that the protocol clearly set out the work to be done at the RVC and what would be done elsewhere, otherwise there could be an assumption that all the work was being done at the RVC.
- *The licence made mention in the general humane endpoints section, that any animals exhibiting any unexpected harmful phenotypes would be killed or in the case of individual animals of particular scientific interest, advice would be sought from the local Home Office inspector. However there were no longer local Home Office Inspectors?* The PPL Holder recognised this but explained that it was still possible to contact the Home Office team and ask for advice and the Home Office had been happy with this wording.
- *Was there any change in numbers of animals to be used between the old licence and the new licence?* The PPL Holder estimated that because of reuse and models having been refined less animals would be used.

The PPL Holder was thanked for attending the meeting. The licence would be adjusted to take into account the comments received and then recirculated.

Once the PPL Holder had left, AWERB discussed the licence further. Their main concern was ensuring that the licence was clear about what work would be done where.

2 WELCOME

A new NVS was welcomed to the meeting. The NVS that was leaving was thanked for all the work he had put into AWERB. He had been a very proactive and supportive member.

3 MINUTES

The draft minutes from the meetings held on 22nd February and 8th March were reviewed. It was noted that several amendments were needed to them before they could be finalised.

4 ACTION LOG

4.1 Item 5.1: Teaching Ponies (08 March 2022 meeting)

An initial meeting had been held to discuss combining the BSU teaching ponies with the Hawkshead teaching ponies to give one pool of ponies. Further information was needed though about the teaching plans for Hawkshead and the numbers of ponies and staff required to deliver the teaching and the timescales.

4.2 Item 5.2: ARRIVE workshops (08 March 2022 meeting)

The first workshop had been held with a second one scheduled for 29th March. All PPL Holders had been contacted and advised that it was mandatory for either themselves or someone from their group to attend. As some could not make the date, a final “mop up” session would be scheduled.

The first workshop had gone well with a reasonable number of people attending and questions had been asked about the videos that the attendees had been asked to watch. The organisers were optimistic that the attendees would consider the ARRIVE guidelines a lot more carefully when writing their future papers.

4.3 Item 5.3: Interview questions about animal research done at the College (08 March 2022 meeting)

Alternative wording for this interview question had been agreed and sent to HR and confirmation received that the interview pack had been updated accordingly.

4.4 Item 5.9: Communicating the role of AWERB to PhD students (08 March 2022 meeting)

The Chair had reviewed the presentation that was given to the PhD students and concluded that it covered the relevant points. A copy would be forwarded to the 3Rs Regional Programme Manager for input on the 3Rs.

It was noted that there were some PhD students who did not start on the traditional date of beginning of October so would not receive this induction presentation. The possibility of an additional presentation to be given as part of one of the weekly seminar series would be investigated.

4.5 Item 5.10: Air handling units at Camden (08 March 2022 meeting)

The specialist engineers were still on site doing a full MOT of the whole system. It would take about 3 weeks in total to complete.

4.6 Item 9.1: Handling rabbits (08 March 2022 meeting)

The proposal to approach rehoming charities to see if they could provide rabbits to be used for handling purposes had been looked in to, but it had been concluded that it was not a viable option for several reasons including increased risk of importing animal pathogens which may impact other animals in the area or the rest of the unit. This could be mitigated with quarantine and health screening but would come with a significant cost.

4.7 Item 3.13: End of PPL Report (9 February 2022 meeting)

The updated report had now been received and was due to be discussed at the April meeting.

4.8 Item 3.15: BSU Virtual Tour (9 February 2022 meeting)

The virtual tour was being changed to a video with photos and information pack.

4.9 Item 7: Retrospective Assessment template (Home Office) (24 November 2021 meeting)

The suggestion that the retrospective assessment template needed to set out the specific details that the Home Office were looking for had been fed back.

4.10 Item 3: Camden stables – emergency access point (8 September 2021 meeting)

The fire brigade contact had been e-mailed several times to ask for their views on whether the outside yard was the most appropriate emergency access point for them, but no response had been received.

5 PROJECT LICENCE: NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION DISCUSSION

The PPL Holder was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that he was applying to do rodent work. The focus of the work was on developing vaccine antigens against highly impactful diseases that caused massive morbidity and mortality in pigs such as African swine fever. An effective vaccine for such diseases would not only alleviate suffering in livestock, but also likely have a positive economic effect, particularly in low and middle income countries. This project aimed to use a novel computational approach including multiple antigens to design and test vaccines against such pathogens that had been previously difficult to vaccinate against. Success of the designed vaccines within this project in a pre-clinical model would allow these vaccines to be carried forward externally into clinical testing with the view of reaching clinics.

The following comments were raised:

- *What were the key focus diseases as several were mentioned in the licence?* It was confirmed that the focus would be on African swine fever, malaria and COVID. These were the three vaccines that were being developed. Potentially flu and tuberculosis would be future diseases to be looked at.
- *Mention was made about making the vaccines mutation proof. How did that work?* It was explained that a computational platform had been developed for making mutation proof vaccines which was based on modelling. This was used to get validation in vaccines that were then used for clinical trials in humans and validate the computational approach.
- *How could AWERB be reassured that the use of the animals was justified: what guarantees were there that the results of this work would be better than what was already available?* It was recognised that this section needed to be strengthened and examples of work done on vaccines be added.
- *In the project harms, mention was made that the immune system of the mouse was remarkably similar to that of humans.* It was felt that was too broad a statement, particularly as there were quite a few examples where there were significant differences between mouse and man.
- *Mention was also made that the project aimed to design vaccines against a variety of diseases, both veterinary in nature and translational – this should be changed to say veterinary and/or medical, because there was translational medicine in veterinary work as well.*
- *AWERB recommended that the proposed intramuscular injections should always be given with anaesthesia as they were very painful injections.* The PPL Holder explained that anaesthesia had been put as optional in order to provide a choice, as there were occasions where it could be more stressful for the mice to undergo anaesthesia than having the injections. Using transient anaesthesia would deal with the acute pain issue that the mice would otherwise experience.

- *AWERB pointed out that for intramuscular administration, some of the mice might exhibit lameness. This should be added to the licence.*
- *The licence mentioned that the volume of the immunisation would be kept to a minimum where possible. It was recommended that if large volumes were needed, then names of the muscles should be included.*
- *AWERB suggested including example diagrams from the Experimental Design Assistant to supplement some of the points that were made in the licence.*
- *The licence made mention that for some of the protocols, single sex mice would be used (mainly female) but with the option of using male mice to confirm results identified in female mice. It was pointed out that by proposing to separate out the sexes could result in the unnecessary doubling of the numbers of animals being used. The PPL Holder explained that the reasons they wanted to use primarily females was that the existing data they had all related to females so it meant data could then be compared. However, he was happy to start moving over to using both sexes on a small scale to see how it went. AWERB confirmed that they were happy with this approach.*
- *For the experimental design, more information should be included to explain how bias would be avoided, particularly in relation to randomisation by allocation.*
- *An example of how sample size had been calculated should also be included in the licence.*
- *There was no mention of pain relief and analgesia mentioned in the licence. This would be added.*
- *The licence mentioned that any mice with piloerection would be kept under observation for up to 10 days. The PPL Holder confirmed that this was something they encountered quite frequently in mice when using viral vector based vaccines but that they showed no other signs that they were suffering discomfort or pain or weight loss. Was a scoring system already used in which piloerection could be included? It was confirmed that they did have a scoring system for their current licence in relation to malaria. It was agreed this should be discussed separately to see if it could be adapted as a starting point for a body scoring system.*
- *Loss of appetite: was there a system for measuring food intake or was this just based on weight loss? The PPL Holder explained that it was based on measuring the weight of the animal. The section would be reworded to make it clearer.*

The PPL Holder was thanked for attending the meeting. A meeting would be arranged separately to discuss the monitoring scoresheets and the humane end points. A revised copy of the project licence would then be circulated to AWERB.

6 3RS

6.1 Breeding and Colony Management discussion group update

This item was deferred to the May meeting.

6.2 Mid/End of Project Licence templates

It was agreed that the revised mid/end of project licence templates should be trialled with immediate effect.

7 NVS REPORT

7.1 Camden

- **Suspected pneumonia virus of mice in the rats:** the NVS reported that the serology results had come back as negative from the rats that had been at risk of having been infected. Tests had also been done on a group of mice that had potentially been in the same area. These results were not back yet but it was unlikely that these would have been infected.
- **Ferret:** one of the ferrets had not recovered following an anaesthetic surgery. It was undergoing a full postmortem as it was relatively rare for there to be issues with these surgeries.

7.2 Hawkshead

- **Horse and large animals studies:** no issues to report
- **Dog colony:** first one was due to start whelping in 10 days
- **Chickens:** there had been some issues with the chickens that the NVS had looked into.

8 NACWO REPORT

8.1 Camden

- Ponies and cows had returned to Hawkshead for the Easter break.

9 TRAINING RECORDS

AWERB reviewed the training records that had been received. The Camden NACWO explained that they were currently reviewing the frequency of the refresher training. They were initially focusing on the licence holders that have been here the longest to make sure their records were all up to date and followed best practice. They were also making sure there were regular reassessments, and that progress was being made on techniques and skill sets.

10 ASRU CHANGE PROGRAMME

The Chair reported that the emphasis was focusing on ensuring that processes were formalised.

11 RESPONSE FROM PPLS HOLDERS TO QUESTIONNAIRE THAT HAVE RECENTLY ATTENDED AWERB MEETINGS

AWERB noted that the responses to the questionnaires that had been received from the PPL Holders had been very positive.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 6th April 2022.