



London AWERB Hub Meeting

26th February 2020

Apologies

Apologies were received from [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

Previous Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved and authorised for publication on members' websites.

Welcome and Introductions

[REDACTED] attended the meeting in place of [REDACTED]

Matters Arising

Nothing to report

NC3Rs Manager ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED])

By now, all establishments in the Hub should have received invitations to the Pan-London 3Rs Symposium, scheduled for 22nd April. Currently ~130 people have signed up, the majority being technicians, so more representation from researchers would be appreciated.

Poster submission abstracts are also being sought. There is the possibility of separate prizes for technicians and researchers, but this may depend on the amount of posters. Delegates can submit posters they have already presented elsewhere.

Non in-vivo departments are also being considered for attendance. For example, those developing in-silico methods would be welcome under the principle of Replacement.

Trade exhibitors will be present in order to fund the event.

Training Workshop for AWERB Members

Last year's workshop, organised by the London Hub, was well received by all who attended. However, this year may be too soon to hold another, with an already busy

event schedule in place. Experimental design was still considered to be the best subject for a future event, [REDACTED] will contact [REDACTED] to check if he can still host the next workshop.

Action point: [REDACTED] to contact [REDACTED] about possibly hosting a workshop in 2021

Standard Operating Procedure Discussion

This discussion was postponed, as the speaker was unable to attend.

Brexit Matters

Previous suggestions from last year that, in the event of “no deal”, animals may be waved through customs no longer appears to be the case.

Any impact on animal welfare caused by longer journeys, due to customs checks will be strongly opposed by UAR. The horseracing community may also be an unlikely ally in lobbying for animal freedom of movement. The aim is to have research animals treated differently than those being move for agricultural purposes.

The Channel Tunnel will not allow transport of animals for research or food, the aim is to revisit this policy.

The new points-based immigration system recently proposed suggests that skilled technicians should still be able to immigrate.

Harm Benefit Analysis Guidance Document

The draft guidance document from the ASC was previously circulated for discussion. The group felt that some areas were productive, but there were reservations in others, particularly the language was somewhat impenetrable, and the increased workload placed on AWERBs. It also seemed quite prescriptive in how tasks should be performed. It was suggested that some areas could drive a wedge between the AWERB and scientists.

There was concern that if a formal HBA is required at establishment level, it could present a significant Freedom of Information burden.

Wider distribution of the draft to AWERB members would be helpful. [XX] agreed to circulate his thoughts on the object.

Action Point: [REDACTED] to contact [REDACTED] for specific comments about the draft document

Coronavirus Contingency Plans

Discussion on plans in event of the Covid-19 outbreak escalating mainly focused on staffing levels of animal units, either in the event of an establishment shutdown, or a critical number of Named Persons being indisposed. Additionally, increased demand may make obtaining PPE difficult. Contact lists of critical personnel should be compiled. An exchange of business continuity/disaster plans was proposed.

Forced Swim Test

The Porsolt forced swim test (FST) has recently come under scrutiny, following campaigns by PETA and the AJP. Following Freedom of Information requests, several establishments have been misrepresented in the press as having banned the procedure, whereas they have only stated that they have no current plans to perform it. The ASG (RSB) is planning a consensus document on the subject.

The test is used in two ways. Firstly, as a model of depression, which is not validated. Secondly for testing of antidepressants. All antidepressant drugs show a delay of immobility in the FST. Regulatory bodies such as the MRHAS or FDA do not prescribe what tests should be used on drugs, but the FST is the main one. Should the FST be banned outright in the UK, it is likely that any testing of novel antidepressant compounds would simply move abroad.

Promoting Timely Submission of PPL Applications (update)

The group reported that licensees are still being left without licence coverage due to lack of timely engagement. There is seemingly no push for timely comments from the HOIs

ASC Activities (update)

A review of “futures work” is being undertaken: identifying issues which may impact animal work.

The ASC is no longer planning a review comparing ASPA with other countries’ legislation.

The ASC reviews all PPL applications involving the use of NHPs, but has also reviewed a sample of submissions for other species and will publish their report soon.

ASRU have finally published non-technical summaries online from 2017. 2018 summaries should be published by April.

Any Other Business

Posters from the recent LASA annual meeting are now available to be viewed on their website.

The next London AWERB Hub meeting is the last to be hosted at [REDACTED], and under the current Chair. [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] has expressed an interest in the role of Chair. Any anyone else would like to be considered, or to follow in the next three years, please put your name forward.

Date of next Meeting

The exact date of the next meeting, most likely in September or October 2020, will be agreed in due course.