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**Minutes:** AWERB

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**Status:** Chair approved

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**Meeting held:** 5 November 2019 at 2pm in F1c SKYPE MEETING TO F82 Hawkshead

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**Present**

**Attendees:** 11 plus one in attendance, 1 by invitation and 7 apologies.

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**1 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including a senior animal technician who was attending the meeting as an observer.

**2 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2019 were confirmed as an accurate record.

**3 ACTION UPDATE**

**3.1 Item 4: Virtual BSU (October 2019 meeting)**

Enquiries had been made with the department that had received an internal grant to put together virtual tours. It turned out they were using the same contractor. As a potential back up option, another contractor had also been identified and enquiries would be made to see how much they would charge to finish off the work and how long it would take.

A query was raised about what was the purpose of this video: was it for training or for information purposes? It was explained that it related to Openness: to enable members of the public to see for themselves virtually the labs and how they were kept and maintained, as it was not practical or fair on the animals to offer continual tours. As the facilities in Hawkshead had recently been updated, the plan was to redo the videos so the new facilities could be shown.

**3.2 Item 10 and 11: Project licences: mid term and end of project reports not yet received**

Deadlines had been given for these reports. If the reports were still not received they would receive an official warning from the Establishment Licence Holder stating that as project licence holders it was an official requirement that they provide these reports. The letters would be copied to their Heads of Departments.

**3.3 Item 12: Assessors List (October 2019 meeting)**

This had been reviewed to make sure that it only included current people. A gap analysis had also been undertaken and discussions would be held about the options to fill these gaps.

**3.4 Item 7: checklist for reviewing project licences (April 2019 meeting)**

A copy of project review form used by another institute had been obtained, this had been circulated to AWERB along with a copy of the ASRU Operational Newsletter which set out how to handle

retrospective applications. AWERB were encouraged to review these to see if there was anything from these documents that could be added to the check list.

**3.5 Item 3.3: PPL refresher training and culture of care workshops (March 2019 meeting)**

It had now been agreed that these should be two separate workshops rather than one combined one.

**3.6 Item 9: Companion Animals query (June 2019)**

Discussions were being held to set up a project to review several options, including having a student assess the reactions of the pigs to different scenarios such as playing recordings to them of other happy pigs as pigs were sound dependent. An update would be given at the January meeting.

**3.7 Item 8.2: Animal Suppliers (July 2019 meeting)**

There was now a new process for suppliers and users had been informed of this for those animals they wanted to bring in directly. It was important that when users were sourcing animals that they ensured the animals received proper veterinary checks before being transported.

For the suppliers form this had been QA audited and requested changes had been received. Once these changes had been made the form would be circulated.

**4 3RS**

As agreed at the October meeting this was now a new standing item on the agenda:

**4.1 Single-use needle posters now up in BSU in Camden and HH**

- These complemented the CRACKIT challenge, to create a needle for critical compound delivery without loss of material to dead space, with a syringe to allow needle changing to minimise cross-contamination and welfare implications of needle re-use
- Poster reminds users of the welfare and scientific compromises of reusing needles, includes images of effect of repeat use on the tip of the needle
- The NC3Rs Programme Manager was happy to discuss any issues with users for exceptional cases of needle re-use

**4.2 Mouse aggression study**

- NC3Rs have recently published a study looking at the prevalence of aggression in male mice. This study was conducted using a survey and cooperation of 143 technicians across the 44 facilities in the UK and abroad. This was thought to be the first study that has been conducted across so many sites
- Key findings include the fact that strains showing high prevalence of aggression are C3H, CBA, DBA and CD1, whereas 129S, C57BL/6 and BALB/c showed low prevalence
- The mean facility-level prevalence of aggression related-injury across facilities and strains was found to be 15 in 1,000 mice. This figure represents a background rate of aggression, which can be used by facilities as a benchmark of current practice.
- Recommendations for minimising aggression in group-housed male mice were included based on the findings in the report, these were:
  - If a choice of strain was possible for the scientific aims of a study, consider whether a strain showing a low prevalence of aggression can be used.
  - Minimise the frequency of cage cleaning to avoid disruption of the olfactory cues in the cage environment. Spot clean dirty bedding as needed, rather than changing the full cage weekly or fortnightly.
  - Transfer clean and dry nesting material during cage change (do not transfer soiled bedding).

- Establish stable groups with littermates, wherever possible. If randomisation is required as part of the allocation process for experimental design, this can be done without mixing unfamiliar mice in a cage.
- Discuss with suppliers the steps they could take to reduce aggression (e.g. transporting mice with littermates).

A query was raised as to whether NC3Rs were in discussions with suppliers about separating litter mates when supplying mice as that was a frequent cause of aggression in mice. It was advised that NC3Rs focus was getting the users to feed back to the suppliers as they were the ones that were experiencing the problems so it was felt that it was better coming from them. However this suggestion that NC3Rs should also raise with suppliers would be raised.

#### **4.3 Aged animals care, husbandry and welfare paper**

- Interesting paper which summarised the authors' collective experience of welfare considerations that are applicable to the use of aged laboratory mice
- The paper recommended that the default time point for commencing enhanced monitoring should be from 15 months of age (with the exception of progeroid models of accelerated ageing)
- The paper presents recommendations for enhanced monitoring, behaviour assessment, husbandry and veterinary interventions in aged mice, and comment on common clinical signs that they have observed in ageing mice
- The recommendations in the paper should possibly be considered by AWERB in future if project licence applications were submitted that propose the use of aged mice

#### **4.4 Experimental design workshop**

- 32 attendees had signed up for an EDA workshop taking place late November.

### **5 NVS REPORT**

The following was reported

#### **5.1 DMD dogs**

A number of suggestions were made to improve the health and welfare of the dogs including the use of raised beds and the playing of firework tapes to get the dogs used to firework noise and identify any that were particularly stressed. The committee were pleased to hear that general preventative health care (such as routine dentistry) was being undertaken.

### **6 NACWO REPORTS**

As it was 'flu season, a policy had been bought in that all staff had to wear surgical masks when with the ferrets.

The cladding work had not yet finished though the teaching animals were now back at Camden (ponies and calves). They were being closely monitored and if there were any concerns about their welfare they would be returned to Hawkshead.

A "welcome to the BSU" lecture for the new students had been well received, generating a lot of interest and questions.

### **7 ESTATES**

#### **7.1 Camden**

Concern was raised about the state of the driveway outside BSU Camden. Estates were getting a budget together to resurface the driveway but not until spring.

Humidity in mice rooms: records were being compiled to show the fluctuations in these rooms to see if any pattern could be identified.

## **7.2 Hawkshead**

Autoclave: this was in the process of being validated.

Resurfacing: there would be access challenges in getting into BSU due to the planned resurfacing up to gate to BSU that was due to start the following week.

Paddocks: the new gates and fencing had now been installed.

## **8 USE OF ANIMALS FOR TEACHING IN UK VETERINARY SCHOOLS**

An e-mail had been received via the Veterinary Schools Council about what was deemed as acceptable practice in relation to the use of animals in teaching in order to form a collective VSC view on this. AWERB were providing a response in relation to the teaching animals at Camden as this responsibility came under their remit.

## **9 ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE AMENDMENT**

AWERB noted that the Establishment licence had been recently amended.

AWERB were informed that the Establishment Licence could now be accessed on the new ASPeL system (depending on the permission level of the user).

## **10 CONDITION 18 REPORTS**

Two condition 18 reports had been submitted to the Home Office in September 2019. Another report was due to be submitted soon.

## **11 PROJECT LICENCE AMENDMENTS**

AWERB noted that one project licence had been amended since the previous meeting.

## **12 PROJECT LICENCES – END OF TERM REPORT**

AWERB noted the report that had been submitted following the expiration of a project licence:

The following comments were made:

- There was a comprehensive number of papers that had resulted from this work.
- Animal numbers used and severities: although a species of animal had been requested in the licence, it had not actually been used. There was no reference in the report to the reason why.
- For some of the animals, more had actually been used than had been anticipated in the licence. Although a flexibility of 10% was allowed, it was good practice when getting close to the numbers limit to calculate how many more animals were actually required and to submit an amendment
- There was a query raised whether the ARRIVE guidelines had been followed for the published paper. The report specified that they had but there was uncertainty whether that was the case. This would be double checked. It was agreed that following ARRIVE guidelines should be added to the PPL refresher workshop, with the emphasis on why it was important to follow these guidelines: which basically was ensuring that someone could follow what had been done and reproduce the same model.

AWERB noted that taking into account these comments, the report that had been submitted was of high quality.

**13 STUDY REQUESTS**

**13.1 Study Request**

AWERB noted that a request had been received for the collection of blood from pigs. The research focused on virulence determinance of *Streptococcus suis* that circumvent the innate response by identifying bacterial components essential for survival or proliferation in whole blood. AWERB had approved the request so long as it was checked that the ante-mortem work carried out on the pigs would not influence the data.

**14 TRAINING RECORDS**

The lay panel member had met with one of the NTCOs to run through the training records process. She was now comfortable with the process and how comprehensive it was.

A QA audit on the training records was carried out every 6 months. It was suggested that a summary of the results of this audit should be provided to AWERB as it would give an indication of how much training was going on under ASPA.

**15 THANKS TO LAY PANEL MEMBER**

It was noted that this was the current lay panel member's last AWERB meeting as she would be moving onto another committee for 2020. She was thanked for her contribution over the year to AWERB – her input as a lay person member had been very valuable

**16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This was scheduled for 3 December at 2pm.