

University of Leeds

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee

Minutes of meeting of 27 July 2022

Seven members of the Committee joined the meeting (one for part of the meeting) with two people in attendance. During the current Chair vacancy, the Establishment Licence (PEL) holder had agreed to chair the Committee pending the new lay member Chair taking up the role from September. New members were introduced and welcomed to the Committee.

Minutes

21/130 The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2022 were received and approved.

Establishment Licence (PEL) holder and Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)'s update

(Received paper AWERC/21/28)

21/131 The NVS reported that an evidencing compliance CPD workshop for project licence (PPL) holders had been held, with another planned in September. The Committee was told that the event had been well-attended and that three PPL applicants invited to the meeting had also participated. A member reported that they had found the workshop useful both as a refresher and in terms of considering documented records that might be required for audit purposes.

21/132 The acting facilities manager had stepped down and a Faculty member had temporarily taken over the role. Concerns had been expressed regarding staff shortages and the temporary arrangements for animal facilities manager cover. However, staff of two animal facilities would continue to coordinate to reduce disruption of services and the Committee was assured that animal health and welfare would take priority and not be compromised. The Committee had also received assurances that the advertisement to appoint a new animal facilities manager was being finalised.

21/133 A new NVS had been appointed who would join the University in October. The current NVS had agreed to stay on in a reduced capacity to facilitate handover and NVS backup provision. The new NVS had been invited to the September evidencing compliance CPD workshop.

Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers' (NACWO) Report

21/134 Issues with high temperatures had been experienced on one site during the recent short heatwave. One air handling unit had not been running at full capacity so frequent monitoring had been implemented with room doors being left open to improve air circulation. No animal welfare issues had been seen in

the breeding rooms and there had been no animal welfare issues to report in either facility.

- 21/135 The main concern reported was regarding staffing levels which, due to sickness absences and the start of the holiday period, had become critical in terms of resilience of arrangements. The NACWO reported that previous proposals and requests to address this had not been progressed. Due to the resulting low staff levels, there was no capacity to enable the movement of staff between sites. The Committee was told that animal care and welfare would remain the primary focus of staff but there would be an impact on their ability to provide support for procedural work. Concerns were also raised regarding the prioritization being given to SRDS meetings, which had not taken place for some years but which were now being scheduled at a time when staffing levels were so low. The Committee's support for staff wellbeing was acknowledged, however, it was noted that the NACWO had reported that things had become very difficult and stressful for staff. ACTION: PEL holder to discuss this with Faculty Management immediately after the meeting.
- 21/136 Discussions about the merger of sites had raised the possibility of more rooms becoming available outside the facility. The NACWOs were concerned about having to check external rooms, their additional workload and the potential increased risk of infringement if work outside the current animal facilities was increased all needed to be considered in decision making. A member who had been engaging with researchers to establish current research requirements explained that rooms would not be sought outside the facility for animal holding and that efforts to consider more strategic ways of integrating work were not being helped by a lack of positive conversation.
- 21/137 It was acknowledged that plans for restructuring had been causing negative impacts on staff morale and wellbeing. The Committee, which had previously engaged in discussions about staff wellbeing, was asked to consider how support could be provided to animal care staff during this challenging period.
- 21/138 It would be timely for the Committee to receive a report on the rooms currently in use. ACTION: Named Information Officer (NIO) to provide details for the next meeting and the NVS to write to the acting manager about the issues raised.
- 21/139 Regarding changes to the ASRU ways of working and the need to evidence compliance it was considered important for NACWO and NVS inspections of rooms outside the facility to be recorded. ACTION: NVS to communicate this to colleagues responsible.

ULBSC Report

(Received paper AWERC/21/29)

- 21/140 Consideration of audit requirements and related challenges had been impacted by a focus on the proposed merger. Consideration had been given to recording

as much as possible through the IT system and to advise users that this would be possible, while acknowledging that this would not be a simple undertaking.

21/141 REDACTED users had been slower to understand the impact of the planned merger. Discussions had been taking place around accommodation and location of equipment and the key issue concerning animal health status. Some equipment would be difficult to house with relocation requiring building work, the investment in which may not be supported. Other equipment could be housed in REDACTED but the health status of REDACTED was not equivalent to that of the animal facility and the impact of transfer of animals would require detailed consideration. Information had been gained, including input from users, and partial solutions were emerging but it was still unclear what the final solution would be.

21/142 A recurrent question was whether any space would be available for use adjacent to or near the animal facility, also of the longer term facility needs of the University noting that the facilities were used by researchers across the University and that any plans for restructure required high-level University oversight.

Draft annual report to Council

(Received paper AWERC/21/30)

21/143 Members were invited to send comments on the draft report to the secretary to be included in the report which would be updated, including up-to-date statistics, prior to Council in September.

Terms of reference review

(Received paper AWERC/21/31)

21/144 The terms of reference were accepted without change and the Committee agreed to conduct a review in a year, or sooner should ASRU requirements for Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs) change in the intervening period.

Project licence applications, amendments and reviews

(Received paper AWERC/21/32)

21/145 The Committee was updated on the status of a sub-group which had considered mid-term reviews during the previous session, from which two members had recently retired. With new PPL applications and final reviews for retrospective assessment being prioritised, due to Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) delays in processing and related deadlines, the mid-term reviews remained an ongoing issue and a backlog was reported. In view of the number of applications, amendments and reviews to be considered the PEL holder agreed to reflect on options and report to the next meeting. ACTION: PEL holder, NVS and NIO/HOLC to produce a paper for the next meeting.

Project licence applications

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- 21/146 The applicant gave a presentation which outlined the nature of the work, experience of animals, severity of the protocols and anticipated adverse effects and the Committee was told that already refined methods would be used. In planning the project, the applicant had made use of literature from related research, the NC3Rs EDA and ARRIVE Guidelines and would be using both male and female animals in the project. Animals would be randomised and results would be blinded so that researchers would not know if animals were from test or control groups.
- 21/147 Following the presentation, the Committee discussed several aspects with the applicant including the likelihood of adverse reactions; how mice would be monitored and by whom and what signs they would be asked to look for. Groups, group sizes and the overall number of animals were also discussed and the Committee acknowledged that an allowance had been made for the numbers required to produce the genetically altered animals required for the work. A NACWO reported that previous studies had been conducted with no issues.
- 21/148 The applicant was asked to incorporate comments made in advance and during the meeting and to expand on the details of potential adverse reactions before submitting the application to the Home Office.

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- 21/149 The Committee was told that the application was for work to be done at Places Other than the Designated Establishment (PODES) to be relevant to commercial settings. The work, involving a change of diet, would be done under Animal Health Protection Agency regulations and be regulated under ASPA due to the need for blood sampling.
- 21/150 The applicant advised the Committee that some work involving younger animals had already been done. The proposed work would be concerned with looking at the potential benefits of three different diets in older animals. Animals, including controls, would be sampled at five time points, weight would be checked at the time of sampling to monitor growth and fecal samples collected non-invasively. The protocol would be mild with possible adverse effects including pain at the injection site and a small possibility of infection. Animals would be closely monitored to identify any signs of infection which would be treated with antibiotics in consultation with the NVS as required.
- 21/151 Animals would be selected by weight, gender profile and their genetics to ensure similar size, randomised by complete block design to the diets and 'blinded' so technicians would not know which diet had been fed. Results would be applicable to industry and translatable to humans.
- 21/152 Questions from the Committee related to the adverse effects and it was agreed that the application could be submitted after comments received had been incorporated.

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- 21/153 The NVS informed the Committee that the application was to continue work that had been taking place at the University for several years. Due to plans to merge the animal facilities, the application being submitted was for work involving small animals, a further application would be submitted to continue work with a larger species in due course. The application was concerned with wound healing relating to diabetic patients and involved the import and use of diabetic mice from the US.
- 21/154 The applicant explained that in-vivo work was being carried out by collaborators at another establishment but that the in-vivo studies lacked the inflammatory response that would be seen in whole animal studies. The work would be randomised to treatment or control and would continue to use male animals to maintain consistency and comparability, since females heal more rapidly. A contingency had been included in the animal numbers to account for potential contamination of wounds. To minimise the number of animals needed, historical control data would be used where possible and the same animal would be used for control and treatment.
- 21/155 The Committee asked for comments to be added to application before submission to the HO.

Schedule of business

(Received AWERC/21/23)

- 21/156 The updated schedule of business was received for information.

Other business

- 21/157 Members would be attending the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA) PEL holders' Forum meeting and the LASA Annual Conference in November and would continue to keep updated via meetings with LASA specialist sections and between these and ASRU.
- 21/158 A member made some suggestions relating to the operation of the Committee which the PEL holder agreed to consider. It was proposed that members should be asked to consider options for the process for streamlining and feedback suggestions which would be taken up with the new Chair. ACTION: NIO to contact members (also to feed information into the action point under min 21/145).

Date of next meeting

- 21/159 Meetings for the 2022-23 session were being arranged and would be communicated to members in due course.