

University of Leeds
Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee
Minutes of meeting of 7 November 2022

13 members attended the meeting. The new Chair advised that he had agreed to chair the Committee for two years to provide continuity due to recent staff changes. The new Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) was introduced.

Minutes

22/23 The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2022 were received and approved.

Matters arising

22/24 (Min 22/10) the retiring and new NVS had carried out a joint inspection of all the rooms registered for animal use and had met with researchers. They had met with the Project Licence (PPL) applicant (min 22/12-15) and the application was being finalised.

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

(Received paper AWERC/22/06)

22/25 It was reported by the NVSs that there had been some updates since the report had been circulated. In relation to the second Standard Condition 18 (SC18) report submitted to the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) the licensee had met with the ASRU inspector and been advised to amend the licence to increase the expected percentage incidence of sudden death for the genetically altered (GA) animals since the strain had been found to have a slightly higher risk of this than wild-type animals. The inspector had confirmed that work could continue while the amendment was being processed.

22/26 A second update followed receipt of pathogen re-testing results in REDACTED which had confirmed previous results. A meeting with the veterinary surgeon from the analytical company had been arranged to take place on 9 November to discuss options. Costs were difficult to predict and the timeframe for cleansing the facility could be six to twelve months during which time it was very likely that de-stocking would be necessary. There was also a risk that the pathogens would recur. The REDACTED had been advised that work from REDACTED, would not be able to move to REDACTED as pathogens were known to impact on research outcomes. Research outcomes would have to declare this, in particular where related work had already been taking place under a project/protocol. The options would be clearer after the meeting on 9 November.

22/27 In response to a question from the Chair the NVSs clarified that the REDACTED had no legal responsibility under the Animals Scientific Procedures Act (ASPA). The PEL holder was legally responsible for compliance and animal welfare around all research activities falling within the Act.

22/28 The Committee considered whether any animal welfare issues could arise in continuing to undertake scientific experimental work knowing that pathogens were present. The NVS advised on scenarios and considerations that should be accounted for. The PEL holder shared her experience of similar issues encountered at other establishments. The NVSs provided recent examples of re-derivation and quarantine of animals brought into the University facilities. It was also noted that many facilities

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accepted the presence of certain pathogens if these raised no concerns regarding scientific outcomes or animal welfare.

- 22/29 The NVSs stressed the need for researchers to consider whether specific pathogens would affect their scientific outcomes and reported that researchers in REDACTED had already sourced relevant evidence from available literature to inform which organisms would affect different areas of research.
- 22/30 The Chair summarised discussions and advised members to raise any related ethical issues when attending other relevant meetings. The PEL holder was asked for her view on the present proposal to close a cleaner facility and move work to a less clean site and responded that because the biosecurity issues had only now come to light and were the subject of ongoing discussions, associated issues including ethical and animal welfare concerns would require to be factored into decision making. If it appeared that a decision being taken for financial reasons but which could compromise the welfare of the animals or integrity of research this would be a cause for concern and the PEL holder would wish to be involved in those discussions. The PEL holder reassured the Committee that the REDACTED was aware of the challenges.
- 22/31 Regarding difficulties in contacting a retired researcher about the formal retrospective assessment of his expired PPL, the NVSs hoped that the review could be completed by the 25 January deadline. Efforts to contact the researcher by various means would continue with the assistance of the researcher's former colleagues.

Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers' (NACWO) Report

(Received paper AWERC/22/07)

- 22/32 The NACWO reported that there had been two isolated issues with lighting within REDACTED, had been resolved. People who have access and override keys have been reminded to turn lights off.

ULBSC Report

(Received paper AWERC/22/08)

- 22/33 The report summarised discussions at a number of REDACTED and joint user group meetings where the main concerns had been two-fold. Firstly, users from both sites had raised concerns over the merger/closure, the uncertainty of planning their work and knowing what would happen in future. These concerns, compounded by the recent health monitoring results, had been fed into the discussions about how it would be possible to solve the problems. Staffing had also been impacted by delays in the advertisement of posts.

Arrangements for applications, amendments and reviews.

(Received paper AWERC/22/09)

- 22/34 The Committee was seeking ways to reduce/adjust its overall workload by considering how PPL applications, amendments and reviews could be undertaken in the future. The paper, which had been prepared by the named information officer (NIO), included suggestions received from members and was presented for discussion. The retiring NVS expressed his support for the proposal of the establishment of a small sub-group/groups to review applications etc. which would enable the Committee to concentrate on overarching matters and receive reports. The Committee was asked to reflect on the risk that the burden of work might fall on a small number of people.
- 22/35 During discussion it was felt that the current situation was not sustainable and proposed the

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identification of essential roles to be represented within the sub-group. It was thought that individual members of the sub-group could vary, so no one person would have to review all the applications/reviews for every meeting. It was suggested that a work-loading proposal could also offer the possibility of differentially work-loading of members of the Committee and on the subgroup. However, it was unclear how this would work because membership of the sub-group would be likely to vary, e.g. due to specific scientific expertise, and it was unclear who would do this since the Committee did not sit within a single faculty. The Chair agreed to discuss the workloading matter with the PEL holder. Action: PEL holder

22/36 The different areas of expertise and viewpoints to be represented in a sub-group was noted (e.g. lay, scientific, animal care and welfare, veterinary and a statistician). Due to the complexities of project planning and to ensure statistically relevant data the involvement of a statistician was considered to be important.

22/37 The Committee agreed to take forward existing proposals to establish sub-committees for PPL applications as well as mid-term and final reviews, including the proposal for work-loading. Specific roles to be represented on the sub-groups would be clearly defined.

Review of AWERB openness and policy statement

(Received paper AWERC/22/10)

22/38 The Committee confirmed that it was content with the existing statements.

Project licence review for Retrospective Assessment S5B57

22/39 The licensee provided background to the expired project. Progress had been made in two cancer models to reduce tumour burden in the bone marrow and in ovarian cancer. Due to having experienced facility staff conduct the procedures animal suffering had been minimised, with most animals never experiencing more than mild effects despite the procedures falling under mostly moderate and one severe protocol in the project licence. The severe protocol, included in the licence to enable researchers to determine maximum tolerated doses, had never been used. Experiments were blinded to avoid bias and pilots were carried out to determine what would provide statistically relevant data. In-vivo work had only been carried out following confirmation in human cell lines and donor blood. The licensee kept up to date with NC3Rs initiatives, attended relevant CPD and had reviewed practices to ensure that records had been kept to evidence compliance. Both male and female animals would be used in future.

22/40 During discussion the lower number of animals used, compared with those authorised on the licence, was discussed and the Committee noted the difficulty to accurately predict levels of animal use due to various factors. The Committee thanked the licensee for providing a very clear review and agreed that this could be submitted to ASRU.

Project licence amendment C389

22/41 It was explained by the NVSs that this was an amendment to increase the number of animals on an existing license which had been running for two years. The need for the increase had come about because one of the genetically altered (GA) mice breeding lines would produce low numbers of transgenic offspring (approximately 3 normal animals to 1 GA). The new strain had not been available when the original application had been submitted but would be very useful for the research. Regarding the 3Rs, the licensee had made abundant use of computer modelling prior to commencing in-vivo work and on one particular protocol had been able to reduce the number of injections given to an animal

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from 5 to 3 producing a significant refinement. Additionally, work had been arranged in such a way that the use of each animal would be maximized.

22/42 During discussion the reasons for requesting an increase in numbers was clarified for the benefit of lay members and the licensee confirmed that approximately half of the non-GA animals would be used for controls. The licensee was asked to include this information in the non-technical summary. It was felt that the potential medium-term medical benefits of the work were clear. The licensee agreed to amend the points mentioned and add the use of the controls to the 3Rs section. The NVS confirmed that animals were checked frequently for signs of distress and that the licensees were competent to do this well.

Schedule of business

(Received AWERC/22/05)

22/43 The Schedule of business was received for information.

External meetings

22/44 The PEL holder would be attending the Laboratory Animal Science Association (LASA) PEL Holders' Forum meeting on 21 November, the new NVS, her predecessor and the NIO would be attending the LASA Annual Conference on 22 to 23 November.

22/45 A meeting of the RSPCA Lay Members Forum would be held on 8 December. The NIO would continue to inform members of relevant external meetings.

Other Business

22/46 A member reported that recent work being undertaken overseas by a PhD student had not been reported to the NVS under agreed arrangements. Although the existing system works in most cases, on this occasion this was only picked up when the person concerned submitted his PhD and the NVS and member were contacted to confirm the work had been reviewed. The REDACTED was currently looking into this issue and would draft proposals for a way forward. The member advised that he would be drafting the position statement for REDACTED Chairs and agreed to involve the Chair. Action: Member concerned.

Date of next meeting

22/47 The next meeting would be held commencing at 1000 on Wednesday 25 January on MS teams. A face-to-face meeting would be arranged early in 2023 and the Chair agreed to consult with the PEL holder and NVS about whether, due to potential travel challenges in winter, that should be the meeting in January or the one in March. Action: PEL holder and NVS