

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS
ANIMAL WELFARE ETHICAL REVIEW BODY
Minutes of meeting held on 20 March 2025

The meeting was attended by ten AWERB members, joined temporarily by the PPL holder being reviewed and an external assessor. Apologies were received from five individuals.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 24/50 The minutes of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body held on 20 Jan 2025 (AWERB/24/22) were approved.

Matters Arising

- 24/51 Minute 24/33 – Two new members have been invited to the AWERB committee, one of which has already accepted and will be attending the next meeting.
- 24/52 Minute 24/34 – The Named Veterinary Surgeon has spoken to the NACWOs regarding the utilisation of existing Schedule 1 stock to support the delivery of internal in-vivo training. The original proposed protocol was abandoned in favour of a new one, for which the Named Veterinary Surgeon will draft a Standard Operating Procedure document.
- 24/53 Minute 24/35 – A draft communication regarding gaps in understanding across UG, Taught PG and PGR education is being prepared by the Animal Facility Manager and another member of the committee, to be approved by the PEL Holder and Lay Chair and circulated to the relevant Directors and Pro-Deans. It was agreed this will be completed by June so that the communication is received before the start of the next academic year.
- 24/54 Minute 24/47 – The first draft of the revised AWERB Openness & Policy Statement has been sent to the PEL Holder for approval. Examples from other institutions have been collated by a member of the committee for comparison.

Establishment Licence Holder and Named Veterinary Surgeon Update

- 24/55 In their report (AWERB/24/23), the University PEL holder and Named Veterinary Surgeon noted that:
- a) The rooms in the St James facility have now been removed from the Establishment Licence.
 - b) There have been no significant animal health or welfare concerns since the last reporting period.
 - c) Two Standard Condition 18 reports have been submitted. A non-compliance notification submitted in July 2024 has now received a response and been closed.
 - d) Due to major changes in staffing and operations, the Home Office have advised that they will no longer be regularly responding to Standard Condition 18 reports unless the case is referred to the enforcement team.

Quarterly Farm Report

- 24/56 The quarterly farm inspection report (*AWERB/24/24*), undertaken by an external (DEFRA regulated) clinician on 14 January 2025, was reviewed and accepted by members of the AWERB committee. No causes for concern were identified.

Animal Facility Manager Update

- 24/57 The AWERB noted the information contained within the Animal Facility Manager's report (*AWERB/24/25*):
- a) A new infectious study holding room will be set up in the animal facility using equipment moved from the St James facility. This will allow for a variety of limited pathogen studies to take place in the unit.
 - b) The movement of some pieces of equipment from the St James facility to facilitate existing funded research has stalled due to complications with building structure. Discussions are ongoing regarding the building infrastructure required to accommodate each piece of equipment. Building surveys are being undertaken to support this (without disruption to the animal facility).
 - c) Discussions are underway regarding temporary staffing cover at Bradford, to alleviate complications to rota planning caused by biosecurity concerns between the two facilities.
 - d) A need for replacement flooring in the pig pens and some corridor areas in the facility was identified in the last Home Office inspection. Arrangements are being made by the Animal Facility Manager and estates team to address this.
 - e) A draft proposal for a new out-of-hours access policy was discussed at the last meeting of the University of Leeds Biomedical Services Committee. Feedback has been collated and the draft proposal returned to Health and Safety to be reviewed again before being put in place.

Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers' Report, including update on 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement)

- 24/58 The AWERB considered the information set out in the NACWO report (*AWERB/24/26*), including updates on 3H (Housing, Handling & Habituation) refinements:
- a) There are no welfare issues to report at either the Leeds or Bradford facilities, and any Standard Condition 18 reports are already covered by the ELH/NVS report in *AWERB/24/23*.
 - b) Staff at both the Leeds and Bradford facilities continue to adhere to the new refined handling guidelines in all cases. It was agreed at the last meeting of the University of Leeds Biomedical Services Committee that an in-person seminar would be arranged to cover the key details of refined handling and answer any questions facility users may have. This will be arranged by the Animal Facility Manager for either late March or early April of this year.
 - c) Improvements have been made to the environment of the rat and mouse running wheel cages in the form of sizzle nest and chew blocks, which have been shown to have a positive impact on both species. These enrichments will be offered in all wheel experiments going forwards.
 - d) A rodent barrier has been installed in the animal facility garage at the recommendation of the Home Office inspector during the last audit.

Animal Facility User Group Report

- 24/59 The AWERB received a verbal update from members of the Animal Facility User Groups, and noted the following:
- a) A meeting of the CBS user group will be called before the next meeting of the AWERB committee. A reminder of the single-use needle policy would be discussed at this meeting, following an incident identified by a NACWO where this policy was not followed.
 - b) The chairs of the CBS and Bradford/External user groups will liaise with one another to arrange a joint user group meeting, to allow points to be raised by researchers wishing to use either the Leeds or Bradford facilities following the closure of the facility at St James'.
 - c) Some concerns were raised regarding the level of technical support available at the Bradford facility, although it was acknowledged that measures to address this issue are already being taken by the Animal Facility Manager (as discussed in *Minute 24/57c*).
 - d) Plans for some equipment from the closed St James' facility are still in progress, including investigations into some of the buildings planned to house the equipment to ensure they have the correct infrastructure to support them.

University of Leeds Biomedical Services Committee Report

- 24/60 The AWERB noted the information contained within the report from the University of Leeds Biomedical Services Committee (*AWERB/24/27*), chiefly that a new committee chair has yet to be appointed. A request has already been circulated to the Pro-Deans, but it was agreed that a request from the ELH would also be circulated to project licence holders.

All other points detailed in the report were already covered by earlier items in this meeting.

Project Licence Review: Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance Imaging of Cardiac Regeneration in the Neonatal Mouse

- 24/61 The proposed project licence was reviewed and discussed by members of the AWERB and the external assessor. Concerns were raised regarding the scope, severity and potential applications project and it was agreed that it would not be approved at this time. The prospective project licence holder was advised to revise the document with assistance from the Named Veterinary Surgeon and external assessor.

Annual Statistical Report, Procedures and Licences

- 24/62 The Annual Statistical Report was received and noted by the Committee.
- 24/63 Details of non-regulated work were not originally included in the report but it would be helpful for the AWERB to also have oversight of this. It was agreed that these details would be added and the report re-circulated to committee members for approval by email.

Review of AWERB Application Sub-Committees, Process for Mid-Term Reviews and Impact on Levels of AWERB Business

- 24/64 The number of PPLs awaiting AWERB approval has dropped in recent months, and items such as PPL amendments are being reviewed by sub-committee or by email. As a result, the committee discussed the possibility of reducing the number of AWERB meetings per year.

AWERB Survey Discussion

24/65 Summary will be circulated by NVS before the next meeting.

Any Other Business

24/66 Due to the aforementioned decrease in PPLs awaiting AWERB approval, and the closure of the St James' Hospital facility nearing completion, there are fewer agenda items requiring immediate attention from the AWERB committee. As a result it was decided by committee members that the meeting scheduled for May 2025 would be cancelled, with the next meeting now occurring on the 8th of July 2025.