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**Minutes:** AWERB summary minutes

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**Status:** Chair approved

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**Meeting held:** 16 June at 2pm by MS Teams

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**Present**

Attendees: 11 plus 1 in attendance, 2 by invitation and 5 apologies

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**1 PRESENTATION FROM PROJECT LICENCE HOLDER**

An application for a new project licence had been received. It was to replace an existing project licence that was due to expire. One of the scientists that had reviewed the project licence on behalf of AWERB had also been invited to the meeting.

The project licence was used for both internal research purposes and as a service licence in relation to projects related to respiratory diseases such as asthma and COPD. A new addition to the licence was the ability to be able to run influenza based models as enquiries had been received to run 'flu based type models in small animals. As a service licence, external clients were provided with access to the expertise that the College had in the husbandry and care of animals used for research; running in vivo studies and the respiratory models set out in the licence. Requests would be submitted by clients for studies involving different scientific approaches for the development of novel treatments. As part of the review process, these approaches would be reviewed to ensure that there was a sound scientific basis prior to commencing any studies.

The protocols listed in the project licence were summarised and the following comments were made:

- It was important to highlight that the College had expertise in the specific techniques that were listed in the licence.
- The main models to be used should be described in the project licence (such as the parameters that could be measured and why these were relevant to the disease) as currently there was not much information on why the models were relevant.
- The rodents mentioned for the viral side were not necessarily the optimal ones that could be used. For example cotton rats provided a useful small-animal model for the study of the influenza virus and Syrian hamsters for the SARS-CoV-1 coronavirus. Why had they not been included in the project licence? It was explained that only models in which had experience in had been included. Also, the Home Office preference was to only include models that would be used, rather than additional models which might only be used. The NVS added that his advice was generally to only include models that had experience in. Even though there may be better models available, if the people working in the facility were not familiar with them it could cause problems.
- A query was raised about dosage. The range of doses that would be used needed to be included in the licence in accordance with normal pharmaceutical ranges. Any variation did need to be justified though.
- AWERB were concerned that the licence stated that for food withdrawal this could be for up to 18 hours for rats and mice. This was too long and would be stressful for the animals who would not be able to forage for food during the night as they would usually do. They recommended that food withdrawal should be for a much shorter time. The project licence holder advised that

the 18 hours was for practical reasons in order to avoid someone having to go into the unit in the middle of the night to remove the food. AWERB were uncomfortable though that the animals were being starved for business reasons at the expense of animal welfare and a way of resolving this needed to be found so that the animals did not go longer without food than they needed to. Welfare of the animals was paramount.

- Clarity over who was responsible for the design of the experiments was needed. The project licence holder explained that this was generally the client but with oversight from him. He also did a check that the design was sensible.
- What steps were taken to ensure that clients provided sufficient data in relation to in vitro data so that an informed plan of action for the tests could be put together? From previous experience of working with clients, it was known they could be reluctant to share these data. AWERB were assured that the project licence holder had no qualms in pushing for this information.

The project licence holder was thanked for attending the meeting. He was asked to address the comments raised by AWERB and to then circulate a revised copy.

## **2 PROJECT LICENCE: UPDATE FROM MAY MEETING**

AWERB were reminded that at the previous meeting, they had reviewed a new licence application to continue work that was being done under an existing project licence. AWERB had expressed concern about the proposal to use the 0.75% adenine diet when there was a more refined model available. This had therefore been removed from the licence application. However the project licence holder had since been in contact to ask if she could do a much shorter, modified version of this study under her current project licence as she had ageing animals that would otherwise be wasted. The altered experimental design would ensure the animals experienced a significantly reduced level of adverse effects as well as still as providing important research data for her PhD student. There would also be fewer animals required.

The following queries were raised:

- Would this provide enough data to do calculations on the variability of the end points – had power calculations been done?
- What weight loss limits were in place?
- Which animals were being used? The species name should be added to the document.

Once this information had been received it would be reviewed by the statistician to see if the data provided justified the numbers. If it did then the study should go ahead.

## **3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

## **4 ACTION LOG UPDATE**

### **4.1 Item 5.3: SOP and guidelines – teaching animals (May meeting)**

A SOP had been drafted that set out how the teaching animals were looked after by the BSUs. This was in the process of being reviewed.

### **4.2 Item 5: Lamé stud dog – April meeting**

The dog was due to be x-rayed that Friday so hopefully it should then be known what was causing the problems with his back legs.

### **4.3 Item 4.1: DMD dogs (April 2020 meeting)**

The dog reproduction specialist had confirmed that she was happy to provide training/information talks to the BSU staff and/or to AWERB on canine reproduction.

#### 4.4 **Item 5.2: BSU Virtual Tour (May 2020 meeting)**

Discussions were being held with the External Relations Team about using their contact for the virtual tour.

#### 4.5 **Item 5.4: ARRIVE guidelines (May 2020 meeting)**

A meeting was planned to discuss incorporating the ARRIVE guidelines into a proposed UKRN event.

### 5 **NVS REPORT**

- Pigs at Boltons Park Farm: It was reported that some of these pigs were now lame. One of them has recently had treatment and a check would be done to see if this had resulted in improvement. The study that they were going to be used for had been delayed due to the pandemic.
- Dog castrations: there had been discussions whether the dogs should be castrated before leaving the unit to be rehomed. It had been decided that there should not be a blanket policy but that each dog should be reviewed on a case by case basis according to the nature and behaviour of the dog. There were discussions by AWERB whether chemical castrations could be carried out instead of surgical castrations as an alternative option, however this would involve repeat re-implantations on a regular basis.
- Dog rehoming: As rehoming of the dogs had been put on hold due to the pandemic there had been discussions instead about fostering some of the dogs instead to get them settled into a home environment. It was noted that it had recently been agreed that dog rehoming could be restarted as the rehoming protocol had been revised to incorporate rehoming the dogs safely during the pandemic.

### 6 **CAMDEN NACWO REPORT**

- The ferrets were having seasonal injections and implants.
- The team were still working on a 4 days on/4 days off shift rota. There was one NACWO based with each team.

### 7 **HAWKSHEAD NACWO REPORT**

- The Home Office Inspector received a weekly update by e-mail about what was happening in the units. With one of the NACWOs having recently left, the Home Office Inspector had asked about the remaining NACWOs that were available at Hawkshead to ensure that there were enough available. The Home Office Inspector had been assured that there were adequate numbers.
- Anatomy Pony: The injury was healing really well. The injury hadn't caused any lameness, however she did have arthritis which was being monitored.
- DMD dog: The dog that had problems previously with drinking was maintaining his weight and seemed very happy and bright.

### 8 **3RS UPDATE**

- The NC3Rs Regional Programme Manager was planning to start circulating a 3Rs bulletin to PPL and PIL Holders that would contain information on resources that might be of interest to them. NC3Rs had a number of e-learning resources that were freely available for training and continuing professional development.
- NC3Rs staff had met with animal technicians at different universities around the UK to discuss the ways they introduced new environmental enrichment into their facilities. This had resulted in a new blog that summarised these discussions.
- **2019 International 3Rs Prize Winners** This had been awarded to two joint winners including one for the development of a technique for studying poultry red mite infestation that improved

welfare and reduced the numbers of hens required for field trials by up to 99%; and one for work on a 3D culture that mimics the development of human embryos after implantation – so replacing the use of up to 500 mice per experiment.

- **NC3Rs funding showcase talk – 14<sup>th</sup> April 2020:** this session had been recorded and a copy of the link would be circulated.
- **Prizes/Awards/Recognitions:** A query was asked whether this was something the RVC had considered doing to recognise 3Rs advances. A major conference involving scientists and technicians had been planned which would have incorporated prizes for 3Rs. The details of how it was going to work had not been bottomed out though so organisation had stalled.
- **Tunnel handling for guinea pigs:** A query was raised whether this had been discussed as being an option for handling guinea pigs. At a recent PPL course this had been raised. It seemed to be a growing area of interest as guinea pigs found it stressful being handled. It was agreed that this should be looked into further. An undergraduate project on tunnel handling in rats could potentially be expanded to include guinea pigs in order to obtain pilot data.
- **Thank you:** The NC3Rs Regional Programme Manager was thanked for all the hard work she was doing on the 3Rs – her input on the project licences was invaluable and she was raising points that might not otherwise have been considered. Also all the advice and information she was providing to the RVC was helpful to both researchers and the technicians.

#### **9 NEW PPLS GRANTED BY THE HOME OFFICE**

AWERB noted that there had been two project licences granted by the Home Office since the April 2020 meeting. For the project licence relating to Covid-19 work under this project licence had been delayed due to several issues.

#### **10 PROJECT LICENCES AMENDED BY THE HOME OFFICE**

AWERB noted that there had been one project licence amended by the Home Office since the April 2020 meeting.

#### **11 ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE**

It was noted that the Establishment Licence had been amended to remove a couple of Named People from the licence.

#### **12 MID TERM REVIEW OF PROJECT LICENCES**

AWERB noted the two mid term review of project licences that had been submitted. There had been no major comments raised by the reviewers.

#### **13 END OF PROJECT LICENCE REVIEW OF PROJECT LICENCES**

AWERB noted the end of project licence review that had been submitted.

#### **14 CONCORDAT ON OPENESS ANNUAL REVIEW 2020**

As part of the annual review, the RVC had submitted responses to a web-survey. These responses were noted. If AWERB had suggestions on areas that the College could improve on in this area or could make more of then to put these forward as it was important to consider how the College could improve openness in the future with public and students.

#### **15 REQUESTED AMENDMENT TO PROJECT LICENCE**

As mentioned as a possibility at the May AWERB meeting, the project licence holder had now submitted an amendment for this project licence. This included adding a new imaging technique. The method had advantages in that it did not require a general anaesthetic and was similar to ultrasound in terms of a probe being applied to the skin. More than 2000 human patients have been

examined using this methodology and the only occasional minimal effects were localised reddening of the skin where the probe was applied which quickly resolved. After discussion it was decided that more information was needed on the new imaging method as it was not known what affects the lasers would have on the skin. As it was described as being similar to an ultrasound it hopefully shouldn't cause too much distress. If the method resulted in reducing the amount of anaesthesia required then it would be seen as a beneficial refinement.

AWERB agreed that further information was required relating to several areas which would be requested from the project licence holder.

**16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

This was scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 1pm.

Secretary  
23 June 2020