
Minutes: AWERB meeting

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 11 November at 10am

Present

Attendees: 12 plus 2 in attendance, plus 4 by invitation plus 2 apologies.

1 PPL PRESENTATION: NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION:

The project licence holder and team were welcomed to the meeting. It was explained that they were applying for a new project licence to do work at the RVC. A scientist that had reviewed the project licence on behalf of AWERB was also attending to provide a scientist's input.

A novel ultrasound-based treatment for lower back and neck pain was being developed. Severe lower back pain was a massive healthcare challenge worldwide and was the leading cause of disability globally. Patients were currently heavily limited in their choices of what can happen with severe lower back pain – at one end there was conservative therapy and the other end highly invasive and rarely truly effective surgical procedures such as spinal fusion. The idea was to have something in the gap between therapy and interventional surgical procedures. The key patient group that this work was aimed at were patients without a ruptured annulus, with a Pfirrmann grade score of between 1 and 5: level of disc degeneration but reasonably intact annulus that could enable restoration of disc function. The researchers were focusing on developing a minimally invasive technique to restore spine function, particularly treating the lumbar spine. They were interested in enabling rehydration of the inner part of the intervertebral disc without affecting the outer part of the disc.

The novel technique that was being tested was intended to restore the mechanics of a degenerated intervertebral disc in the back or neck, with an out-patient procedure, performed in under 1 hour, through a single needle. The aim was to alleviate pain, restore motion and quality of life for this large group of patients, at a fraction of the cost of current procedures, and using a process that could be repeated several times over the years without in any way limiting the applicability of more invasive current treatment options such as fusion.

The project licence holder explained the focus of the work and what was involved. AWERB then had queries about the proposed animal model and why it was being used and the possible alternatives; and the animal husbandry. The project licence holder was thanked for attending the meeting. Further discussions were needed before a decision could be made.

2 FEEDBACK ON SECONDARY AVAILABILITY PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION THAT WAS DISCUSSED AT THE OCTOBER MEETING.

AWERB were reminded that this project licence had been discussed at the October meeting. Following that meeting there had been subsequent discussions by e-mail in order to try and seek clarification about some of the work that was not being carried out at the College. Although a

response had been received, it was felt that the project licence holder had not answered the points enough for AWERB to be reassured about what was planned. The part of the study that would be done at the College was the regulatory bit for the GLP component. However, in order to approve the project, the AWERB needed to understand how it fitted into the whole development programme so they could establish why the work was being done and what the other components were and how it all fitted into the bigger picture and whether it made this project worthwhile to do. It was agreed that this should be discussed further with the project licence holder in person rather than by e-mail

3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4 ACTION LOG

4.1 Item 13.1: Stakeholder survey in relation to Cephalopod Molluscs and Decapod Crustaceans

(October 2020): Several people were approached but it was decided that there wasn't anyone in the College with the relevant experience to complete this survey.

4.2 Item 13.2: Digigate (October 2020): The consensus was that this should be an unregulated

procedure provided there was a maximum speed limitation on the treadmill and a maximum time of 2 minutes (as this was similar to a cage change/health check).

5 NVS REPORT

The following was reported:

- One of the dogs had an eye lid mass that had now been removed and she was recovering well.
- Ring-tail lesions: there had been issues with some of the mice and rats that were kept in conventional cages having ring tailed lesions. The main cause of this was usually environmental issues, such as low humidity so this was being investigated as all the readings from the Buildings Maintenance System were within the required range for the code of practice so cage-side measurements were being made. The ring-tail lesions were being seen on animals that had only been on site for a short time so it was not classic ringtail. The affected animals were sited in one area so the cause was localised. The technicians were closely monitoring the animals. AWERB would be updated as more information was obtained.

6 REHOMING:

AWERB received a presentation about the process of rehoming the handling animals in Camden. The animals were usually bred in house for the taught animal handling sessions. The animals were used in these classes for a year before being rehomed.

7 3RS UPDATE

7.1 Improving the quality of research applications involving the use of animals workshop

A reminder about this workshop would be circulated.

8 PROJECT LICENCES AMENDED BY THE HOME OFFICE

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

9 NEXT AWERB MEETING

The following items were deferred to the next meeting due to lack of time:

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- RVC reproduction reproducibility list
- Report back on London AWERB Hub meeting attended
- End of project report

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 9 December 2020 at 10am.

Secretary

23 November 2020