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**Summary Minutes:** AWERB (Standard agenda items meeting)

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**Status:** Chair approved

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**Meeting held:** 08 April 2021 at 1pm via MS Teams

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**Present**

Attendees: 8 plus 2 in attendance and 8 apologies.

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**1 WELCOME**

Two new members of AWERB were welcomed to the meeting. They explained their background and what expertise they would be bringing to AWERB.

An observer was also welcomed to the meeting.

**2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record.

**3 ACTION LOG**

**3.1 Item 1: DMD Project licence (23 March 2021)**

Advice had been sought from the Home Office Inspector about the proposed amendments to the licence. He had recommended some changes including using older dogs for the PK studies. There were several older dogs that had been due to be rehomed. Their rehoming would be delayed slightly and the PK studies carried out using them.

**3.2 Item 4: Tamoxifen (12 March 2021)**

All the potential uses of tamoxifen were being explored to see whether there some refinements could be made.

**3.3 Item 5.4: Anatomy pony (12 March 2021)**

The farrier would be asked to look at the pony's feet to see if she could be provided with metal or plastic shoes to make things more padded for her when she was back in Camden; a meeting had been arranged with anatomy to discuss increasing the frequency of rotating the ponies; the suppliers of the rubber matting had been contacted to see if there were any other options to make the ground softer. Extra matting would be put down in the yard area (where the ponies stood the most) to see if that would aid the foot tenderness.

**3.4 Item 3: Proforma PPL comments form (11 February 2021 meeting)**

A copy of the guide had been circulated to provide advice when assessing project licences. The aim of it was to make the reviewing process easier and to provide prompts of things to consider. It consisted primarily of yes/no questions to check that everything was accounted for in a logical way.

It was agreed that this should be trialled for the next few project licence reviews and then a report back at a future meeting to see how reviewers had found using it.

When using the guidance document, thought should also be given to whether there was anything missing from it.

**3.5 Item 8: Mouse colony (9 December 2020 meeting)**

This project licence application was scheduled to be reviewed at the April meeting.

**3.6 Item 2: Project licence – update from May meeting (16 June 2020)**

The information from the project licence holder had been circulated to AWERB for info.

**4 3RS**

**4.1 NC3Rs Self-Assessment Tool**

A senior academic had agreed to take the lead on completing the Research Group Tool on behalf of the RVC. The tool assessed organisations as a whole across 6 key areas (leadership, people, research and infrastructure, experimental design and reporting, training and publications and wider dissemination), reflecting the breadth of possible 3Rs activities. The results of the assessment would come to a future AWERB meeting for discussion.

**4.2 Breeding and Colony Management discussion group**

The first meeting had been arranged for 14<sup>th</sup> April. The overarching aim of the session was for researchers and BSU staff to discuss how breeding and colony management practices at the College met those of current best practice and identify if there was any room for improvement. It would cover both rodents and zebrafish. There had been quite a good take up, with broad representation, so hopefully there would be a good discussion.

**4.3 NC3Rs PhD studentship scheme**

This had now opened for applications. The deadline was 12<sup>th</sup> May. A copy of the call would be circulated to academic researchers.

**4.4 NC3Rs webinar: refining rodent stereotactic surgeries**

AWERB were informed of a webinar that was taking place the following day on “Refining rodent stereotactic surgeries”.

**5 NACWO REPORT - CAMDEN**

**5.1 New ferret supplier**

New ferrets have been brought in from a new supplier, as the previous supplier had ceased operating. The health and welfare of the new ferrets were being carefully monitored. They were currently in Ferret Quarantine, until they had been given the all clear for any ear mites. The colonies would be health screened again soon (as part of routine practice).

**5.2 Supplied mice**

There had been a few issues with mice having been supplied with large ear tags. The tags had resulted in ear redness, scarring or tears in the ears in at least 3 of the mice. NVS advice was sought and the tags either removed or analgesia provided. This had been reported back to the suppliers.

**5.3 Study project**

A condition 18 report had been submitted following 2 unexpected animal deaths after anaesthesia complications at recovery stage. The steps in the procedure were being reviewed to see what might

have contributed to this. The work had been put on hold whilst investigations were being carried out.

## **6 NACWO REPORT - HAWKSHEAD**

### **6.1 Surgeries**

A lot more surgeries were coming through. Each project was being reviewed on an individual basis to make sure that nothing too complex was being done and to ensure that the right resources were in place. Most of the surgeries were non recovery and the aim was to keep it that way and not do anything too complex or that involved complex post surgery recovery. Although Covid infection rates seemed to be easing up care was needed to ensure that if there was any infection in the unit, there were enough staff available to still look after the animals.

### **6.2 Teams**

Some of the technicians had now received their first vaccination jab. There had been some reactions afterwards. All the team were continuing with the lateral flow testing.

## **7 NVS REPORT**

### **7.1 DMD dogs:**

One of the DMD dogs, had whelped on Sunday night. She had difficulties that had resulted in a torn vulva but was otherwise healthy. Going forward, discussions were needed about whether she could be bred from in the future as she would need surgery after the pups had weaned.

### **7.2 Replacement anatomy pony**

The anatomy pony that had recently been retired from Camden was continuing to settle in well at Hawkshead. A replacement pony for her at Camden was being sourced. One had been identified but had turned out to be slightly too big.

## **8 BREEDING OF OLDER BITCHES FROM THE DMD COLONY**

One of the AWERB attendees declared a potential conflict of interest in this agenda item and offered to leave the meeting but it was agreed that their input would be useful.

The item had been requested by one of the technicians. AWERB were reminded that at a previous meeting about 2 years previously, an amendment for this licence had been submitted to AWERB for review. The technicians had asked that this amendment also included an age limit for when the dogs could be bred to. This however had not happened. A couple of the dogs were still being bred from and had experienced complications during their litters and ended up in the hospital. The technician wanted it putting in place that as soon as a dog experienced complications, they should be retired from the breeding colony. There were other puppies coming through that could easily replace them.

It was noted that this had been raised with the project licence holder and suggestions made that the breeding colony needed to be managed in a way that was productive to ensure that although there were older dogs that could be bred from, younger dogs were put in place to replace them. AWERB were informed that due to external factors the project had been delayed, so that several of the dogs in the breeding colony were older than had been originally planned for them to be bred from.

A query was raised that if a dog had complications and had to be given oxytocin was there a chance that it would happen again: was there a welfare impact on a dog that has had complications during pregnancy? It was important to understand the risks that the dogs were being put under. AWERB were reassured that having oxytocin did not have a serious impact on future whelping or the dog's welfare.

It was recognised that the situation was more complicated than simply stipulating that once a dog had reached a certain age that they could not be bred from again, although there should be a maximum age. This maximum age could be added as an amendment to the project licence, though experience showed that it was generally on average around the age of 5 that breeding issues and complications could be seen. If a maximum age limit was added to the project licence there also needed to be a caveat that if a dog had serious problems not just physiology but also behaviourally (for example with whelping or not being a good mum or being aggressive to the male when mating) then they should be retired earlier.

The management of the breeding colony should be reviewed and regular meetings held between the project licence holder and the technicians. There also needed to be a separate discussion about setting up a formal process for easily flagging concerns about any of the animals in the unit so they could be looked into.

## **9 TRAINING RECORDS UPDATE**

The training records for two personal licence holders had been circulated to AWERB for them to review. The aim of this was to ensure that AWERB were confident that the training and recording of the training was being done in the correct way. The records included training supervision; competency assessment; sign off by NTCO that confirmed that they were happy for the PILH to work unsupervised. It also included the procedures that they were signed off as competent to do and “DOPs” which were assessments of practical skills.

It was noted that as part of the BSU induction process, users would meet with a NTCO, who would go through with them to emphasise what their responsibilities were in terms of being a personal licence holder and to also emphasise the importance of the training aspect. Each PIL holder had a training folder that included their training records which was signed off by the NTCO. This folder was then kept in the unit.

AWERB were advised that this was a key area for the Home Office who would be looking at training records in much more detail in the future, so it was an important element to continue to monitor.

## **10 NEW PROJECT LICENCES GRANTED BY THE HOME OFFICE**

AWERB noted that one new project licence had been granted since the previous meeting.

## **11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **11.1 Virtual AWERB meetings going forward**

AWERB’s opinion was sought about continuing with virtual AWERB meetings going forward as they seemed to have worked really well. It provided more opportunity for AWERB members to comment and were also a lot easier to attend.

The following comments were made:

- A combination of having people attending virtually and also via video conferencing should be avoided, as experience had already shown that these types of joint meetings did not work. It needed to be one or the other.
- For those who were in communal offices, due to the confidential topics discussed, it was important they attended from a private space. Were there private spaces that could be booked? It was noted that the provision of private meeting room spaces would be discussed by College management as part of the building renovation works that were happening, as virtual meetings would probably be more common in the future. The terms of reference should be amended to make it clear that virtual meetings were allowed so that decisions made, could not be challenged at a later point.

## **RVC – Minutes: AWERB: 08 April 2021**

- Guidelines should be provided on how to best carry out these meetings virtually.

AWERB agreed the following:

- AWERB would continue as virtual meetings in the future but that there would be one face to face meeting held a year.

### **11.2 Date of next meeting**

This was scheduled for 27<sup>th</sup> April at 10am. It would be a PPL review meeting. There were two project licences scheduled to be reviewed.

Secretary  
16 April 2021