
Summary Minutes: AWERB (PPL Review meeting)

Status: Final

Meeting held: 23 November at 2pm via MS Teams

Present: 10 plus 1 in attendance, 1 observer and 15 apologies

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the AWERB meeting held on 1 November 2022 were confirmed as an accurate record.

2 NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION

An application for a new project licence had been received. The project licence holder explained that he was applying for a new project licence to examine the effectiveness and humaneness of existing and new stunning and slaughter methods for poultry. The aim was to develop new stunning methods and parameters for poultry that improved welfare at the time of slaughter. The project would also develop stun parameter guidelines (for example minimum currents for waterfowl) which would be used for existing stunning systems to improve welfare at slaughter. The aim was to provide scientific evidence that could directly underpin legislation (UK, EU and worldwide). The results of the project would be disseminated by peer-reviewed scientific publications, presentations at scientific and industry conferences and the development and distribution of fact sheets.

The following queries/comments were raised:

- *ARRIVE guidelines 2.0: how would these be used?* More detail was needed, in particular in relation to experimental design and how this related to the guidelines.
- *The licence made reference to the use of local anaesthetic creams and how when doing work under a previous licence the application of creams to desensitise the skin prior to placing electrodes had caused extra stress to the animals (through the capturing and handling) whereas the use of the electrodes themselves had only caused a minor discomfort. It had therefore been decided that the placement of electrodes without prior application of the cream was the most refined approach to use, as the stress caused by the handling was more than the pain from the electrode. However, was it possible for the cream and the insertion of the electrodes to be done at the same time, so there was no added stress, as the animals would already be restrained for the insertion of the electrodes?* It was explained that would lengthen the time the animals were in a recumbent position so placing extra pressure on their air sacs. Poultry were prone to both respiratory and heat stress, so the aim was to shorten the instrumental time as much as possible. Also, as the poultry found it most stressful being handled, the aim was to keep the handling time as short as possible.
- *How long was the time period usually between application of the local anaesthetic cream and desensitization?* It depended on the cream but the minimum time period would be 20 to 25 minutes.
- *In the sample size calculation, it indicated that 9 animals were needed, but that a further 6 were needed because of the electrical noise. Why wasn't this built into the calculation already though?* The PPL Holder explained that this was based on previous work using a slightly larger sample size. He had since found that when trying to record the small signals from the brain, there was a lot of

electrical noise which added radiating and also main space noise. The work would therefore be carried out in a Faraday cage in order to block the electromagnetic fields and reduce the noise as much as possible.

- There had been inconsistencies in relation to the expected severities for each species/protocol type but this had now been corrected.
- *Cost-benefit analysis: More information in relation to halal slaughter was needed: How many animals were affected each year; how many poultry were being killed without functional stunning – which could then be used to guide the cost benefit analysis more. How the work being done could potentially change the fate of thousands of animals that were being slaughtered.* It was explained that numbers were not kept in the UK about how many animals were slaughtered. Instead, the FSA carry out month long surveys every two to three years. The last survey was carried out in 2018 and although the numbers of animals that were slaughtered using the halal method were small, there were still hundreds of thousands of birds involved. Stunning birds to kill them would not be compliant with Halal, however a lot of the stunning methods were actually recoverable methods in their own right.
- *Did the potential adverse effects include seizures? With conscious animals, could the suffering still be classed as moderate or was it beyond that?* The PPL Holder advised that it was difficult to define what a bird experienced during a seizure. It was suggested that a limit should be added to the licence specifying that if a seizure occurred so many times or happened repeatedly in the first batch of birds then there would be a stop point in order to re-evaluate the work being done and possible change the parameters.
- *Were some of the species of poultry more amenable to being handled than others?* The PPL Holder advised that there was a movement towards using mechanized catch devices, so that humans were not involved. Studies were showing that distress responses were less in comparison to manual catching methods, which indicated that it was humans doing the catching that caused the stress.
- *Had there been any discussions with communities that used the Halal method about whether they would be willing to change the way that they worked, in light of this emerging scientific knowledge?* The PPL Holder advised that for the upright restraint work that he had done, had resulted in buy in from local Halal communities. There had been a willingness to accept new technologies.
- *Was it anticipated that any of the birds might be lost during the transportation process, particularly as older broilers found being transported a stressful experience?* It was explained that they would be using a specific company and they would not be transported in a normal poultry transport truck. It would be a controlled temperature vehicle. They had not previously had any losses when transporting birds.

The project licence holder was thanked for attending the meeting. He was asked to revise the project licence to take into account the comments made and to then resubmit it for a further review.

AWERB were of the consensus that this project licence addressed a very important area in relation to animal welfare.

3 DATE FOR NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 6 December and would be a standing agenda items meeting.

Secretary

6 December 2022