
Summary Minutes for the website: AWERB Standing Agenda Items meeting

Status: FINAL

Meeting held: Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 10am: MS Teams and Hawkshead Campus

Present: 16 plus 2 in attendance and 15 apologies

1 WELCOME

An MRes student was welcomed to the meeting. She was attending as an observer.

2 THANK YOU

The Chair reported that a lay panel member had recently stepped down from AWERB. He was formally thanked for his hard work and contribution to AWERB during his time on the Board.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2025 were formally approved.

4 ACTION LOG/MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Item 2.1: Pest Control (05 February 2025 meeting)

In order to protect the surrounding environment and animals, necessary steps have been taken to manage the fox population. A licensed pest controller has conducted a culling of the foxes, and their cadavers would be used for teaching purposes. Measures have also been implemented to make facilities fox-proof. The situation would be monitored to see if new foxes moved in.

Regarding the rabbits, this would be addressed as part of a broader estates review that was focusing on effective land management. Currently, the fields that have been impacted by the rabbit activity are not suitable for use.

4.2 Item 2.2: Leadership in Openness Award renomination application (05 February 2025 meeting)

The renomination form has now been submitted.

As part of this the sub group have taken the opportunity to review and update the case studies on the website as well as adding information in relation to how technicians provide enrichment for the animals under their care and how this varies for the different the species they look after. The Culture of Care Commitments identified as part a Culture of Care Workshop have been developed by the Culture of Care subcommittee and also added.

4.3 Item 2.4: Anonymous Survey for AWERB members (5 February 2025 meeting)

Questions have been drafted and were being reviewed prior to circulation.

4.4 Item 2.5: Animal Suppliers for rabbits and guinea pigs for teaching purposes (6 February 2025 meeting)

The suggestion of contacting animal rescue centres to see if they could provide guinea pigs for teaching purposes was working well. This had not proved possible for rabbits though as rabbits that are put up for rehoming, are generally those that are difficult to handle, so would not be suitable for teaching purposes. Two rabbits have been purchased instead who would be neutered to address issues related to sexual maturity. The rabbits have been bought during a quieter period to allow technicians to acclimatize them carefully before they are required for teaching.

4.5 Item 2.6: Teaching Animals – outside area at Camden (05 February 2025 meeting)

The proposal to build a housing area within BSU Camden's yard turnout area had not yet received the relevant authorisations. This was being taken forward separately.

4.6 Item 2.7: NC3Rs environmental enrichment workshops (05 February 2025 meeting)

Meetings have been scheduled to work on the suggested enrichment workshops and seminar and materials were being gathered. Training and CPD to technicians was being offered.

4.7 Item 7.1: Building Work (5 February 2025 meeting).

External building work was still providing a challenge for BSU Camden as this has been causing noise and vibration. Preventative methods have been undertaken such as implementing vibration matting and monitoring the animals carefully for any welfare concerns.

4.8 Item 5: Aged mice policy (06 November 2024)

This has now been amended to incorporate the comments raised at the November meeting.

4.9 Item 7.2: NACWOs meetings with PEL Holder (06 November 2024)

Meetings have been scheduled for every 3 months, starting from June.

4.10 Item 2.2: Training database working group (3 April 2024 meeting)

A tender has gone out. In the interim, there seems to be some really good software systems for training which could be explored further, if the training platform with HR, did not come to anything.

5 BOAS DOGS

Following the discussion at the February meeting about the proposed multi-centre clinical trial using a product that would provide relief to BOAS dogs, AWERB had then been asked to e-mail their thoughts on this subject to the AWERB Chair. This had resulted in a mixed response, with some members being in support and some not. A decision was needed soon on whether to venture further with this proposal. It was noted that if a decision was made to progress discussions, that did not mean the RVC were committing to undertaking this clinical trial.

The following points/queries were made:

- Would the clinical trial still proceed if the RVC were not involved? It was assumed that it would likely be conducted elsewhere.
- If the RVC supported the development of this treatment, would it also be seen as supporting the breeding of these types of dogs, which was contradictory to the stance being taken by the UK Brachycephalic Working Group (that the RVC belongs to), who are seeking to get legislation changed to outlaw the breeding of extreme phenotypes such as these dogs.

The applicant had provided some further information about the treatment:

- the treatment has been tested but only in healthy beagles. There had been no side effects. The treatment needed to be trialled on affected dogs to see how long the injections would last for. It was anticipated that it would be between 4 to 6 months.

- The applicants were offering a lifetime supply of the injections to the dogs free of charge, however once the trial was finished, the owners would have to pay the associated veterinary costs to give those injections.
- The applicants have mentioned that the treatment would only be carried out on dogs that were neutered: so the treatment would be used to help individual dogs, who were not then possible to breed from.

A query was raised by the external lay panel member about the Kennel Club as they support and register these types of dogs. Should that influence whether the RVC got involved? It was noted that there were many institutions, including the RVC, who were working with the Kennel Club to try and get the breed characteristics changed and also the Animal Welfare Act amended so that it becomes illegal to breed BOAS dogs. It was highlighted that in the Netherlands, the breed characteristics have been completely changed and their equivalent of the Kennel Club allow these breeds but only with the new changed measurements.

A concern was raised about the actual treatment and whether it would fix all the issues that BOAS dogs have and whether the dogs would be able to swallow properly. Advice would be sought from surgeons.

The following steps were agreed:

- The applicants should be asked to provide further information on the proposed protocol and provide a scientific rationale on why they expected this treatment to work.
- The protocol should be reviewed by the clinicians who are involved in airway surgeries for these types of dogs to get their perspective on whether the treatment would work.
- If the clinicians are in support of the protocol, the new Clinical Ethics Board would be consulted, for guidance on whether, should the treatment prove effective, they would recommend it as an option to be offered by our hospitals.
- If both were supportive, an anonymous vote would be taken by AWERB.
- If AWERB's decision is to participate in this clinical trial, then the College's Executive Committee will be informed accordingly and the steps that have been taken to achieve that decision and their input sought.

6 TISSUE REQUESTS AND PROCESSES – PROPOSED NEW SYSTEM TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

A process for streamlining internal tissue sharing requests was outlined. This would incorporate a new SharePoint portal for requests. AWERB were supportive of this new system, subject to several changes being made to the request form, and updates provided to AWERB on the number of applications received and approved. If there were queries about requests, then these should come to AWERB for their input.

7 ANIMALS IN SCIENCE COMMITTEE SECRETARIAT: LEADING PRACTICE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Animals in Science Committee (ASC) are reviewing how the animals in science sector currently develops, shares and uses leading practice for the 3Rs. As part of this they are collecting evidence to inform its recommendations on how this culture might be improved and had done a call to hear from organisations that had an interest in this field. AWERB have been asked to respond to this call on behalf of the RVC and an initial draft response had been collated for comment.

8 NVS REPORT

8.1 Camden

The following was reported:

- **Ferret:** the head cap from one of the head implanted ferrets had come off and the ferret subsequently euthanised. This was a very uncommon occurrence. A query was raised about what steps could be taken to stop this happening again. It was explained the ferrets have a

veterinary review every 6 months where the stability of the implant and the wound around the edges are checked and that they have no neurological deficits or any issues. The researchers also closely interact with the ferrets and can pick up any potential problems from how they are interacting or behaving in the behavioural tests. As part of the next review process, the PPL Holder would be asked to reflect on what she has learnt from implant failures over the period of the project licence.

- **Handling rabbits:** two new handling rabbits had arrived and were being acclimatised.
- **Zebrafish:** Zebrafish training was being provided, as there had been several issues with egg bound female zebrafish. The aim was to establish better routines and to explain to users the steps that can be taken to reduce this risk. A SOP was also being written which will include the most common recognisable clinical conditions and humane end points.
- **New fish facility:** An application to the Home Office to add the new fish facility to the establishment licence would be submitted shortly. Final checks of the facility were being undertaken.

8.2 Hawkshead

- **Turkey:** a turkey had died unexpectedly with no clinical signs after being bled for a procedure. It had shown no signs of stress during the procedure nor afterwards when it was being monitored post blood sample. The sampling had been undertaken by a very experienced technician. A PM examination had been performed but nothing had been found. A condition 18 report had been submitted.
- **Condition 18 reports:** the Home Office are no longer formally responding to these, instead they are scanning them for non-compliance issues. They are responding very quickly to keep alive requests.
- **Dog study:** There were now only 3 dogs on the injection study and these were due to finish very shortly. These dogs were showing severe DMD phenotype but were within the severity of the licence and were being nursed by the vets and technicians.

9 NACWO REPORT

9.1 Camden

There were no major concerns to report. There were still issues with temperature and humidity which were being reported to Estates. It was understood that Estates were replacing the air handling units on the roof

9.2 Hawkshead: nothing to report.

10 NTCO REPORT

Because of time constraints, the following agenda items were held over to the April meeting.

- **Assessors List**
- **Review of training records**

A small document was being put together to provide advice to AWERB about what to consider when reviewing training records.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

- 2 April: Standing agenda items: 10am to 12pm

AWERB Secretary, 29 April 2025