

---

**Summary Minutes for the website: AWERB**

---

**Status:** FINAL

---

**Meeting held:** Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 10am

---

**Present:**

15 plus one in attendance and two observers and 14 apologies

---

**1 WELCOME**

Two observers were welcomed to the meeting.

**2 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 were formally approved.

**3 MATTERS ARISING**

**3.1 Item 5: BOAS Proposal discussion (19 March 2025 meeting)**

An e-mail summary on AWERB's discussions had been passed on but there were no further developments to report.

**3.2 Item 6: Internal tissue requests form (19 March 2025 meeting)**

The form had been modified as suggested by AWERB. It would be circulated for one final review before being launched.

**3.3 Item 7: Animals in Science Committee: Leading practice call for evidence (19 March 2025 meeting)**

RVC response to this call had been submitted.

**3.4 Item 8.1: Ferrets: project licence review (19 March 2025 meeting)**

The PPL Holder would be asked to reflect on what she had learnt from the implant failures over the period that she has had the project licence as part of her next project licence review. AWERB were advised that there had been an assessment previously of the ferrets and their implants to see if they could determine a pattern for any that failed. This might be a good starting point for the review.

**3.5 Item 4.3: Anonymous Survey (19 March 2025 meeting)**

The questions were being finalised and would be sent out to AWERB members soon.

**3.6 Item 4.6: Enrichment seminar (19 March 2025 meeting)**

The initial focus was to provide a broad presentation to cover the basics and also Camden and Hawkshead species. The presentation would initially be targeted at AWERB and then technicians, before being rolled out to a wider audience. Ultimately, the aim was to offer workshops and tours for those that were interested.

**3.7 Item 4.10: Training database working group (19 March 2025 meeting)**

HR have now purchased a learning management programme and were exploring the platform's features and capabilities. A meeting was being arranged to discuss the system and whether it would be possible to use it for the A(SP)A training records.

**4 3RS**

**4.1 Non-Animal Approaches across Europe: webinar series**

This webinar series had showcased advances in model development and opportunities to apply non-animal approaches in research fields associated with high levels of animal use. A report was given on the cardiovascular science session. The emphasis had been on use of those models for drug testing and assessing function in a 3 dimensional model of Cardiac Myocytes mostly and obtaining those models from people with genetic disorders that would give rise to cardiovascular or increase the risk of cardiovascular dysfunction.

**4.2 ASRU meeting on replacement**

It was reported that an ASRU meeting on replacement was scheduled to take place that afternoon.

**5 CULTURE OF CARE**

It was reported that following the Culture of Care Workshop held the previous September, the Commitments that had been identified in relation to improving animal welfare, scientific quality and care of staff had now been published on the website.

The next stage was to progress on taking forward these commitments and ensuring that they were met.

It was hoped to be able to run another Culture of Care workshop as the first one had been very beneficial.

The next Culture of Care meeting was in the process of being arranged. As part of that the aims and objectives would be discussed, along with identifying related activities and providing updates to AWERB.

**6 NTCO REPORT**

**6.1 Assessors List**

AWERB noted the current version of the Assessors list. They were informed that an assessors course was imminently planned with the aim of identifying more assessors for each category of species as there were currently some gaps. This would run internally first before potentially offering it as an external course.

**6.2 Personal licences: end of licence fee year**

It was noted that the end of the licence fee year was approaching (05 April 2025) so a check of personal licences was being carried out and those licences that were no longer required were being revoked. In addition, there was currently a 2-week transfer window to enable licences to be transferred between institutes without incurring any additional licence fees. AWERB expressed their thanks as this was a very busy time of year for the NTCOs and the assessment and administrative work involved in getting licences transferred in time.

**7 NVS REPORT**

**7.1 Hawkshead**

An update on some health issues with frogs and sheep was provided.

- **Frog Health Issues:** It was reported that a new species of frogs was being housed within the BSU for a clinical research project. The frogs when they had arrived (about 6 weeks previously) had appeared well on their initial health check, however after about a month, several of them within one tank developed a bacterial infection known as red leg. There is little literature available about how to treat the infection in these types of (non-aquatic) frogs. Antibiotic treatment was started, but 3 frogs had been lost, and others were losing weight. Strict PPE and quarantine rules were in place; however it was not known what factors were making these frogs susceptible to this infection. Culture and sensitivities were taken and have come back as a typical presentation of this disease.

The supplier was originally meant to supply 15 frogs but had only been able to supply 10, as the other 5 that they were going to provide, had not seemed very healthy. However, the frogs that subsequently became sick, did not become sick until a long time after arrival. The environment, humidity tanks and room checks have not identified predisposing factors. AWERB were informed that these frogs were a very hard species to obtain. The supplier used supplies the pet trade rather than research. The supplier had been vetted before use, however because they were not a standard schedule 2 animal supplier, it was not possible to do the same type of health screen checks that would usually be done. The frogs were reported to be captive bred within their facility in the UK. No more frogs would be obtained from this supplier until there was reassurance in place that the infection was not a supplier related issue.

The research that was being done was being carried out in a different location to the BSU. The way the researchers were handling the frogs has been checked by the NVS and changes requested which they have implemented. However these particular frogs had not been involved in any research or left their tank before becoming sick. The loss of these frogs though will have had an impact on the research, as it was hard to get hold of the type of species they need for their research.

- **Sheep Health Issues:** It was reported that 25 one-year-old sheep have been brought in. Some though have recently developed skin lesions over their faces which was thought to be ringworm. The sheep are in isolation with strict PPE measures to prevent the spread to other species. The ringworm is expected to run its course within 8 to 16 weeks. Once the lesions have gone another fungal culture and smear would be done, before allowing the sheep to be handled.

## 7.2 Camden

- **Aquatics:** Training was being provided on aquatics to a fellow NVS, including an introduction to the research systems and how they are constructed and what the different checkpoints and main risks were.

Work was also being done with the researchers on issues they have been experiencing such as egg bound fish and phenotypic issues, were now improving. The main challenge was the upcoming changeover from the old to the new facility, which should result in an improvement to the environmental variations that had been encountered.

## 8 NACWO REPORT

### 8.1 Camden

- **Mice:** Guidance was being sought from the NVS about a mouse strain, following four incidences of what appears to be missing limbs in young mice. It was believed to be either due to a mutation or inbreeding rather than related to a procedure, because of the nature of

the missing limbs. The supplier was also being approached. The missing limbs did not seem to be causing any suffering to the animals.

- **External building works noise:** the drilling seems to have reduced in severity and frequency. Anti-vibration mats have been placed under all racks to try and reduce the amount of vibration going through the racks and causing distress to the animals. There did not seem to be any major long-term impact on animal welfare though the team were continuing to monitor the situation and have been providing positive reinforcement, particularly to animals on the ground floor, who have displayed the most visual detectable behavioural change, in order to calm them. Although the company doing the drilling had been contacted, no proper response had been provided about whether the drilling was now finished.
- **Aged mice:** aged mice (approximately 80 weeks old) have been received from a supplier for a client. On arrival they were quite agitated and there have since been some very severe fighting incidents resulting in animals being euthanised. Other mice have scratch wounds and also displayed general stress behaviour. The supplier has been approached to see if any incidents were reported during their transportation. The NVS have examined the mice and several have established arthritis, requiring pain relief, which has been fed back to the supplier.

It was suggested that in future one option could be to bring in the mice when younger and house them here until they reached the required age, though this would require advance planning. This would work out at the same cost as purchasing them as aged mice from a supplier. It was also suggested that the supplier be asked to box the mice together in advance of being transported, so that they had opportunity to get familiar with each other before the stress of transportation.

## 8.2 Hawkshead

- **Frogs:** Extra food has been ordered in for the frogs to build up their strength. Additional monitoring checks were also being carried out so that if the bacterial infection spread it was caught as soon as possible.
- **Dogs:** the daily dosing study is now finished. The PPL Holder had sent a lovely thank you e-mail to BSU for all the support provided with the dogs and how much their hard work and dedication had been appreciated in completing this project. AWERB echoed the PPL Holder's thanks and asked that their appreciation also be passed on to the Team as they recognised it has been a very difficult study.

## 9 TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW: ANNUAL REVIEW

The terms of reference were reviewed. No changes were suggested.

## 10 FEEDBACK FROM PPL HOLDERS THAT HAVE ATTENDED AWERB

The feedback reports from the PPL Holders were noted. One of the PPL Holders felt some of the discussions had got side-tracked into discussing refinements to animal welfare that might impact on the validity of the models and experiments being planned and was concerned that a focus on treatment/welfare of animals would reduce the quality of output and complicate protocols significantly so negatively impact number of procedures and the harm/benefit equation. AWERB discussed this but were of the consensus that it was important for PPL Holders to realise that one of the roles of AWERB is to focus on animal welfare and to recognise that improving the welfare for the animals did not necessarily negatively impact on the science. It was also a reflection too that AWERB were being proactive and efficient in pushing PPL Holders to ensure that they have considered

alternatives to their proposed models and that they have good reasons for why alternatives were not suitable. More however needed to be done to ensure that PPL Holders realised that this was part of AWERB's role. AWERB's role and the importance of taking into account the whole aspect of animal welfare would be emphasised even more during the PPL Holders training courses. Also the NVS when meeting with PPL Holders to discuss their project licence applications, would ensure that PPL Holders are aware of the role of AWERB, what to expect and what AWERB are looking for and how animal welfare is evaluated and the need to justify to AWERB why they want to use their chosen models.

**11 ITEMS TO NOTE**

The following items were noted:

- New PPLs granted since the previous meeting
- Project licences amended since the previous meeting
- Secondary availability PPLs amended since the previous meeting
- Study requests approved since the previous meeting
- Condition 18s submitted since the previous meeting

**12 END OF PPL REVIEWS**

An end of PPL review was noted. No major problems had been identified.

It was highlighted that another end of PPL review that should have been submitted in late 2024 had still not been received. The PPL Holder would be contacted by phone and if still no report, then the PEL Holder would write to them.

**13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING:**

- 21 May: PPL Review: 10am to 12pm

Secretary  
30 April 2025