
Minutes: AWERB

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 29 March 2018 at 2pm in Hawkshead Council Room VIDEOLINKED to Camden Council Room

Attendees: 7 members present; 2 in attendance; 11 apologies

1 ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT WORKING GROUP

1.1 Environmental Enrichment Audit Report

Following the first environmental enrichment (EE) audit that was held in 2017, an environmental audit report had been put together. AWERB commended the working group on the amount of work that had been put into both the audit and the report.

The Committee's attention was drawn to the following points/recommendations:

- There were many examples of EE that the working group had classed as highly commendable. It was agreed that the Chair of AWERB, would write to the people involved in these areas to say how pleased the Committee were that their work had been commended in the report.
- The report made recommendations for suggested improvements particularly for mice and fish
- The efficacy of the new EE implementation should be monitored against an action plan
- There should be continued support of staff education and information dissemination regarding developments in EE.

It was important that an action plan be implemented and that this environmental audit was made into a living document that was used to benefit the animals to reflect all the hard work that had gone into it.

A couple of BSc projects would be offered in the autumn that related to investigating enrichment options. The students would be doing 12 weeks projects starting in October, so there was opportunity for a lot of work to be done during that time period. It was agreed that these projects should be co-supervised by academics and BSU technicians.

A suggestion was made that there be an enrichment competition, where researchers were encouraged to submit designs and get engagement on what creates good enrichment for animals.

It was agreed that a table of suggestions should be kept as this would be a good reference point to see what had been tried and which had been successful.

2 FEEDBACK FROM ANNUAL MEETING WITH THE HOME OFFICE INSPECTOR

The annual meeting with the Home Office Inspector had recently been held. The Inspector had been very positive in terms of what the Units were doing the current state of the facilities. There was discussion about fish facilities including the water quality in the tanks and how it was monitored.

The Home Office Inspector had also been very complimentary about how the AWERB meetings were run and the items that were discussed, in particular the welfare of the animals in the unit.

3 NEW PROJECT LICENCE APPLICATION

The new Project Licence Holder was welcomed to the AWERB meeting. It was explained that poultry meat birds (broilers) were bred for high muscle gain but required very careful husbandry. Monitoring technologies have been developed to automatically collect flock level data to help manage these delicate birds. However, current technologies were limited as they were unable to dynamically record environmental data across a poultry shed at the height of the birds. The overall aim of this project was to develop and trial a multi-functional robotic system that could autonomously collect data (such as climatic or atmospheric conditions or bird condition) within a poultry shed at the same level as the birds. At this preliminary stage the aim was to trial the robotic platform in a small flock of broilers whilst it was under manual control to monitor the behavioural responses of the birds and to ensure that the robot does not negatively affect bird welfare.

As the robotic platform being trialled would move among the animals it was important to ensure that they reacted appropriately and that their welfare was not compromised. Broiler chickens should benefit through improved health and welfare, and humans through improved bird productivity.

The following queries were raised by AWERB:

- What were the welfare concerns? In trials, lame birds had not been able to move out of the way of the robot, so the aim was to modify the robot so that it could pivot. If the robot met an object that wasn't able to move then the robot would stop.
- How was the robot monitored and controlled? The robot was controlled from outside the room so that the birds were not disturbed. There were cameras on the robot that were used to monitor the birds. The robot could not move unless a button was held down.
- When not in use, would the robot remain in the room or taken out? The preference would be to keep the robot in the room so that the birds would get used to the robot, however there was no facility to shut the computer controls on the robot down remotely. It therefore needed to be by the hatch so that it could be manually switched on or off.
- How fast does the robot go? It was explained that it moved very slowly. It was suggested that the speed of the robot should be included in the project licence (20 cm per minute).
- Were there any expected adverse effects? It was explained that apart from the natural mortality rate of broilers, no adverse effects were expected. The natural mortality rate had to be accounted for in the project licence though.

The project licence holder was thanked for attending the AWERB meeting. The project licence would be discussed further and comments fed back after the meeting.

AWERB were of the consensus that the project was worthwhile doing. A query was raised about why a robot was required – would sensors on the ground work as well? It was explained that currently the available sensors were hung from ceilings that measured temperature and humidity's, however there were concerns that these sensors do not give an accurate a reading that was required. A more true reading of what birds experienced was needed by taking measurements in amongst the birds.

It was agreed that elements of the licence needed to be reworded. This included future potential developments to improve the welfare of chickens, such as the robot being able to identify lame birds.

4 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the AWERB meeting held on 22 February 2018 were confirmed as an accurate record.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

5.1 Item 5: CPD training (February 2018 meeting)

A co-ordinated CPD programme was being put together for the next academic year. The programme would be reviewed at the September 2018 meeting.

5.2 Item 13: ARRIVE guidelines (February 2018 meeting)

The ARRIVE based protocols were still being worked on. They would be finished off for the next meeting. The ARRIVE guidelines that the protocols were based on had been circulated.

5.3 Item 3: ASRU Compliance (January 2018 meeting)

It was agreed that it might be more effective to combine having a workshop on ARSU compliance with the Refresher training to PPL Holders workshop that was being designed. This would make it a more attractive and interesting session for the researchers to be involved in.

5.4 Item 3: Culture of Care Workshop (23 January 2018 meeting)

A date had not yet been scheduled to run this workshop at the VC.

5.5 Item 5: Fish (January 2018 meeting)

Samples from the fish had been sent off. The results had not yet been received.

6 LAB ANIMAL WELFARE QUESTION

The Biomedical Research Awareness Day (BRAD) was an American initiative that will be held in vet colleges, high schools and hospitals. Each institution will be talking about the importance of animals in research, the welfare issues and the ultimate goal of advancing human and animal medicine. The organisers provide posters, games, free giveaways etc. This information had been forwarded to the RVC to see if of interest.

After discussion AWERB were of the consensus that this would be a useful event to be involved in. There was uncertainty though whether to do the event in conjunction with BRAD (so being able to take advantage of the materials that they provided) or to do our own event.

There was discussion whether the event should be aimed at students or members of public. It should focus on why the College was involved in research on animals. It was agreed that a working group should be set up to discuss co-ordinating this event.

7 ESTATES ISSUES

7.1 Water Ingress: Camden

Following the recent constant rain there had been a leak of rain water in the yellow floor. No animals had been directly affected. The cause was being investigated.

7.2 Temporary cage wash: Camden

This had been installed and was in use.

7.3 Rabbits: Hawkshead

It was reported that there were a huge number of rabbits in the fields in Hawkshead that were digging holes. This was potentially a risk for the ponies and horses that were due to be kept in those fields. Estates would be contacted for their advice.

8 SHARING RESOURCES GROUP

AWERB noted the animal sharing figures for Camden for the period January to March 2018. The figures for Hawkshead would be obtained and circulated.

9 TRAINING RECORDS

It was reported that the skills of the technicians were being reviewed. A database had been set up to record this information and provide a summary of training, species and techniques and procedures and husbandry, in order to identify where skills gaps were. A copy of this would be provided to a future AWERB meeting.

10 NVS REPORT

An update for Hawkshead was received.

11 STUDY REQUESTS

AWERB noted that 3 study requests had been approved.

12 AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE

AWERB noted that the Establishment Licence had been amended.

13 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 17 April 2018.

Secretary
03 April 2018