

**University of Leeds**  
**Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee**

**Minutes 1 June 2020**

14 members of the Committee joined the meeting with two people in attendance

19/67 The meeting had been convened so that the Committee could receive reports on animal welfare and one new PPL application. The review of minutes would be deferred until the next meeting.

19/68 The Home Office Inspector (HOI) was welcomed to the meeting

**Membership**

*(Received paper AWERC 19/16)*

19/69 The HOLC/NIO reported that changes to membership included a new ULBSC representative and one NACWO who had recently left the University. Arrangements to appoint a replacement NAWO were in hand. The Chair told the Committee that she would be stepping down after this meeting and that a new external lay Chair had been appointed to take over from the next meeting.

**PEL holder's update**

19/70 In the week commencing 16 March the University had moved quickly to a position where work on campus had been limited to essential services only which had remained the case since that date. Arrangements for critical research were having to be completed by prior arrangement and approval which had to be signed off by the relevant [REDACTED] as well as the [REDACTED]. The animal facilities had effectively been put on "tick-over". Culling of animals had been kept to a minimum, limited to neonates born during the period, some mice that would not be used within a designated timescale and a smaller number of rats. No animal welfare issues had been reported and staff and NACWOs had been fulfilling their animal care and husbandry responsibilities on a rota basis with strict social distancing for which staff were thanked.

19/71 The University was now at a stage where resumption of research activities was being planned. It was emphasised that this would be under strict social distancing protocols which was proving to be an extremely detailed and drawn out process, involving considerations such as checking the safety of buildings, water supplies, lifts, fire alarms and importantly having to work out how social distancing would be applied in each building to make sure working would remain safe. The University was working on a plan for phased return.

19/72 The NVS was invited to report then questions would be jointly addressed.

**NVS's Report**

19/73 The NVS reiterated that no mass culling had been done upon lockdown. Important colonies of animals had been maintained in order to support essential work. The Committee was told of the need to continue limited breeding to keep colonies "ticking-over" so as not to lose important animals while research labs had been closed. Only pre-wearers and mice that could not be used had been culled at the time (200) and the total up to the date of the meeting had been just over 500. Some of these mice and rats would have been culled anyway for colony management purposes. A study that involved six pigs had to be curtailed two days early in order to facilitate disposal of six animal carcasses in good time. This had no implications on scientific outcomes. Seven rats on a severe protocol had to be terminated because further procedures on the protocol would have required close monitoring and frequent observations not possible under the strict social distancing that had to be quickly introduced. However, some data was obtained from the use of these animals.

19/74 Re-start of research would be on the basis of social distancing, in line with health and safety advice, and authorised on a case by case basis as had been reported by the PEL holder. Some requests had already been received and one small study had been done during the last few weeks.

- 19/75 The NVS had been in close contact with the HOI regarding applications in the ASPeL system before lockdown, one amendment had been submitted and a plan was being put together to reschedule the others.
- 19/76 The number of animals across both sites had decreased to 50 percent (approximately 550 cages in total across both sites). GA lines had been put on “tick-over” with plans looking three months ahead. The rat colony had been maintained with very small numbers and the Committee was told that once it does become possible for research to start up again there would, inevitably be a delay in increasing numbers.

### **NACWOs’ reports**

- 19/77 Animals were being cared for on a rota basis and no welfare issues had arisen. During the period two issues with plant had occurred, one being a loss of air pressure and the other slipping belts on air handling equipment. Both had been fixed within a matter of hours without giving rise to any animal welfare concerns. The other site had also introduced three teams with normal animal care and husbandry being done along with genotyping facilities being provided by transnetyx which had continued to operate throughout. An engineer had dealt with one minor issue very quickly.
- 19/78 With regard to planning for return the NACWOs reported that guidance from the University would be required before any decisions on how to operate could be agreed. This would be guided by advice and instructions from the University re-entry Committee. Provisional ideas had been under discussion but it would be premature to report anything to the Committee until after the University advice had been published.
- 19/79 A member reported that ■■■ researchers would be returning to work in a phased manner. Information regarding this could be shared with facility staff so that they would be able to plan accordingly. The member was thanked for this and it was noted that a booking system might have to be introduced. **ACTION: member concerned and NACWOs**
- 19/80 It was suggested that temporary relocation of studies across sites might be something worth considering. It was agreed that all options should be considered. **ACTION: NACWOs**
- 19/81 The Chair asked for thanks from the Committee to be passed on to all the unit staff who had continued to work under difficult circumstances to maintain animal welfare. **ACTION: NVS and NACWOs**
- 19/82 With the potential for resurgence of Covid-19 in mind the NVS asked the HOI whether funds might be made available to cryopreserve GA lines. The HOI agreed to look into this and to ask other HOIs.
- 19/83 One of the ULBS representatives reported that they would liaise with researchers to begin discussions about organising and prioritising work. Also the suggestion about making the best use of space across sites would be put to the users. Questions regarding potential cost changes were also discussed along with the availability of PPE. The NACWOs reported that there was currently a limited supply of PPE and anticipated that there would be an increased need for PPE in future as more frequent changes in gloves, masks and visors would be necessary.

### **Process for considering applications and reviews**

- 19/84 The NVS invited suggestions on how the Committee might proceed to consider applications and reviews under the current circumstances where meetings were likely to continue via electronic means. It was proposed that for new applications good information circulated early with members participating in that phase followed up with a Teams meeting should continue.
- 19/85 With regard to reviews, to avoid the risk of facing a backlog, it was proposed that a nominated group of reviewers, with an appropriate balance of expertise, should be set up to work through these.
- 19/86 A member raised the question of prioritisation and it was suggested that a written protocol for prioritisation of applications could be drawn up so that the Committee would be working to a set of known rules rather than working on an ad-hoc basis.

19/87 The PEL holder reported that social distancing was very likely to remain a feature of life during the whole of the 2020-2021 academic year. That would significantly reduce the number of researchers that could be permitted access to the animal units at one time and in-turn reduce the amount of research work that it would be possible for them to carry out. [REDACTED] ulties would be involved in prioritisation and authorisation for work to re-start. **ACTION: PEL holder NVS and unit manager to discuss arrangements**

#### **Application A361**

19/88 The applicant joined the meeting and delivered his presentation. This provided background to the work and gave reasons why no alternatives to animals were possible. Information about the study protocols was described, both male and female animals would be used, researchers would be blinded to the phenotype, formal power calculations would be used for in-vivo studies and 3RS refinements were outlined.

19/89 Discussions following the presentation were concerned with reproducibility, litter mate control animals to reduce variability, animal welfare and the inclusion of remote, potential risks. The calculation of numbers was also discussed, whether animals in one protocol were for continued use in another and the applicant was anticipated that two thirds of these would be experimental. How animal numbers had been arrived at from previous data was also considered. The Chair noted that the applicant had produced a good lay summary.

19/90 The applicant was asked to include more clarity on animal numbers (number per group etc.), to give an example of this and to address the changes submitted by members via email before submitting the application to the Home Office.

19/91 The applicant was thanked for providing additional information regarding how he was keeping up to date with animal welfare and good practice information. **ACTION: NVS and NIO to edit presentation template to include a section requesting this information.**

#### **Home Office Inspector**

19/92 When invited to comment the HOI indicated that the meeting had worked very well with presentation and questioning that covered everything necessary. In addition contingency plans had been excellent, the staff had done well managing studies, having a low number of animal culls, pre-empting other matters along with doing was necessary to maintain compliance with ASPA. Once we are happy with plans and processes for the next phase, to fit in with University guidance, they should be sent to the HOI who agreed to maintain frequent communication with the NVS. **ACTION: NVS**

#### **Other business**

19/93 Recently published RSPCA documents would be brought forward for discussion at the a future meeting.

19/94 The Committee expressed thanks to the NAWOs present and the whole animal care team for keeping the animals safe during this difficult period. The NACWOs were asked to pass on the HOI's comments. **ACTION: NACWOs**

19/95 The Chair was thanked warmly by the PELh for chairing the Committee for the last 5 years and wished good luck in her future endeavours.