

University of Leeds, Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee

Minutes 2 December 2020

10 members of the Committee joined the meeting with one person in attendance.

Minutes

20/33 The minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2020 were received and approved.

Matters arising

20/33 (Min 20/10) The Establishment Licence (PEL) holder reported that a response had been sent to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

20/34 (Min 20/13) The Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers (NACWOs) present at the meeting confirmed that, despite difficulties of working in separate teams due to Covid-19 arrangements, communication had been good. Staff were making use of WhatsApp, email and communicating, safely distanced, during handovers.

PEL holder's update

20/35 Written reports from named persons had been received in which recent incidents would be covered. In future it was possible that these reports would be consolidated to avoid any repetition. The unit manager had been asked to attend meetings in future.

20/36 Discussions were taking place with the communications team regarding the provision of support for applicants drafting lay paragraphs.

20/37 The University would be renewing its subscription to Understanding Animal Research.

Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)'s report

(Received papers AWERC/20/06 and 20/07)

20/38 A regrettable incident of non-compliance had been reported to the Home Office (HO) and would be covered in more detail in the NACWOs' report. Also two condition 18 reports had been submitted and feedback from the HO on these was awaited.

20/39 Of the three new project licence (PPL) applications considered at the last meeting one had since been granted, another had recently been submitted and the third was being amended by the applicant following advice from the Committee and had yet to be submitted.

20/40 The Chair enquired as to the possible consequences relating to condition 18 reports and occurrences of non-compliance. The NVS explained that these were a matter of individual responsibility, self-reported and investigated locally with detailed reports submitted to the HO. In relation to Condition 18 reports, the HO would consider

whether all measures had been taken to avoid the death of an animal under experiment. Examples of outcomes might be for the HO to ask for an increase in the severity of a protocol or to recommend earlier intervention points to avoid or limit animal suffering. The HO inspector would ask questions or request further information as necessary. Reports would be filed and could be benchmarked against similar reports from other establishments.

- 20/41 The NVS advised that failure to provide food or water was the most commonly occurring instance of non-compliance that, unfortunately, occurs across all licensed establishments, often as a result of human error. Possible contributing factors had been considered and discussed by concerned parties. These included cage design, training and standard operating procedures (SoP). The most likely consequence would be a letter of reprimand to the PEL holder and should similar incidents happen within a short period of time then the establishment's risk level could increase which would mean a higher level of HO scrutiny.

NACWOs' report

(Received paper AWERC/20/08)

- 20/42 A NACWO provided details of the arrangements in place for checking animals, presented some factors that could have contributed to non-compliance in the recent case (see M 20/38 above) and advised that the unit manager and a NACWO had held a meeting with the individual concerned.
- 20/43 Discussions followed during which a number of suggestions were considered. The importance of balancing closer scrutiny against any disturbance to animals was noted. It was anticipated that the findings of the HO Animals in Science Research Unit themed inspection on this issue might offer further insight into steps that might help prevent such occurrences. Whilst the Committee's focus was with the animals, concern for the welfare of staff was also expressed. The NACWOs were asked to pass on thanks to staff who, it was acknowledged, had been under pressure.
- 20/44 The Chair asked members to keep thinking about methods that could be employed to avoid a recurrence. It was agreed that, if appropriate, the University should add its weight to the review of cage design. However, the financial implications associated with such a significant and widespread change were noted. The SoP should be reviewed. ACTION: NACWOs, NVS and unit manager.
- 20/45 The Chair enquired about whistleblowing arrangements as one of the measures that would offer up opportunities for people to voice concerns. The PEL holder advised that a policy, general to the University, was in place but nothing written into the framework of the Committee. This would be considered. ACTION: PEL holder.

PPL Applications

Application A366 and final review FR47

- 20/46 The NVS explained that the application was to continue the provision of genetically

altered (GA) mouse breeding and cryopreservation as a service to licensees at the University. The licence had the benefit of bringing in animals, breeding and cryopreservation being done by technical staff with the necessary expertise.

20/47 The previous PPL holder presented a review of work done under the project during her two years as licence holder during which time there had been a deliberate move away from generating new GA lines to cryopreservation. The new applicant then explained the work to be done under the project, the reason for animal numbers requested for each protocol and their severity. The NVS explained that two different severity breeding protocols had been included to allow for the breeding of animals with a phenotype that could have the potential to cause moderate suffering.

20/48 During the discussion that followed reductions in animal numbers and in prospective severity were noted. The Committee was told that the project would serve researchers at the University along with their external collaborators with requests being considered case by case.

20/49 The applicant was asked to change some scientific terminology in the lay paragraph.

Application A367

20/50 The NVS provided background to the application which was concerned with immune responses to infection. Following a presentation detailing the work to be done under the licence matters discussed included animal numbers, the logistics of managing the work, the members in the team and their expertise. The Committee was told that, due to efforts to reduce animal numbers, even with a large team of investigators fewer mice may be used.

20/51 The applicant was asked to provide further information about the team and individual members' expertise in the application and to address the 3Rs (reduction, refinement and replacement) in the final paragraph of the short lay paragraph.

Application A368

20/52 The applicant provided some background to the application, concerned with brain cancers, detailing the number of people affected who suffered from an extremely poor prognosis, short life expectancy and who had a desperate need for treatments. The Committee was told about the complexity of the condition and that, despite lack of progress and changing awareness, brain tumours still remained understudied in comparison to other cancers. However, a few promising findings had come from research under the previous licence for which more research was now needed. The licence would be concerned with better understanding the tumour whilst at the same time looking for a treatment.

20/53 The presentation covered the 3Rs with 3D models being used to develop tumours and replace animals where possible even though an in-vivo model would still be necessary to study complex tumour development. The applicant explained the model and the detailed scoring system for humane endpoints that had been

provided. Animal experience would reflect the complications in human patients but suffering would be limited due to frequent monitoring, the application of strict early endpoints and the limited number of animals in which adverse effects would be likely to progress quickly.

20/54 The applicant was asked to include details of animal welfare monitoring and scoring of adverse effects to the short lay paragraph.

20/55 All three applications would be submitted to the HO once suggested amendments had been incorporated. ACTION: NVS to liaise with applicants.

PPL mid-term reviews

(Received paper AWERC/20/09 and 20/10)

20/56 The Committee received a report on three mid-term reviews that had been completed and the updated schedule of reviews for information.

Schedule of Business

(Received AWERC/20/04)

20/57 The schedule of business was received for information.

Date of next meeting

20/58 It was agreed that due to the short period between this and the next scheduled meeting (12 January) that the January meeting would be cancelled and, subject to the Chair's availability, new dates would be sought for meetings to take place on a regular day every two months. ACTION: Administrator to seek potential dates and consult with members.