

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODY

Minutes of Meeting held on 30 January 2024

11 members attended the meeting, with 5 people in attendance. Apologies were received from one member.

The NVS, appointed to cover the University NVS parental leave, was welcomed to his first meeting in the role as a full member.

Minutes

23/75 The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 were received and approved.

Matters arising

23/76 A member reported that he would be working with the Interim Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS) and a colleague on an animal usage ethical approval decision tree and that the Chair would write to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Innovation regarding the willingness of AWERB to review non-regulated animal studies. The work relating to expectations when working with external partners was ongoing. Progress would be reported to either the March or May meetings and subsequently be reported to the University Research Ethics Committee.

NVS's Report (*received paper AWERB/23/18*)

23/77 The Interim NVS reported that the handover with the University NVS, began in November and was continuing with the Facilities Manager and staff. A recent visit to the farm had concluded all the site visits. No concerns had occurred during the period since the formal handover date in January 2024 with only typical, minor issues common in animal facilities being observed.

23/78 The NVS had been working with an applicant to refine a new project licence (PPL) application to a point where it would be ready for review by the Committee and on an amendment to an existing PPL to request secondary availability which was nearing completion.

23/79 Some 3Rs information had been circulated and further information, now available on the NC3Rs website, included a new collaborative network for cardiovascular research, resources for colony management and a webinar recording on effective, engaging communication plus upcoming webinars demonstrating their experimental design tool. An upcoming, free, online meeting on fish welfare had been organised by the RSPCA to take place at the end of February. The Committee was advised that the EU had been considering changes to fish husbandry and housing requirements which, when finalised and published, would be likely to impact the UK research community if the Animals in Science Regulation Unit (ASRU) adopted the same standards. Current plans to establish a fish facility at the University would have to be updated to reflect any changes.

23/80 During discussions a member raised concerns about the support provided for researchers in drafting new PPL applications. This had arisen because a colleague who urgently needed to have a new licence in place by July, when his current PPL expires, had been struggling to get support. The NVS acknowledged that the timescale in this instance was short and that some miscommunication may have occurred since the handover as a result of staff changes. He was happy to speak to researchers and would seek to expedite this particular application. It was highlighted that, following the decision regarding the closure of the SBS facility at the end of August, anybody requiring secondary availability at another institution on an active PPL would require ethical approval from both the University and the second establishment's AWERBs prior to submitting an amendment to ASRU.

Researchers should be advised of the process so that they are able to allow sufficient time for amendments to go through both AWERB and ASRU reviews. The Chair observed that researchers seeking secondary availability on active PPLs should aim to submit their amendments to the Committee by the end of May if at all possible and that there would be two meetings of the AWERB during the intervening period in March and May.

- 23/81 There was some discussion around two establishments which had been identified as potentially being able to offer facilities to the researchers affected. The importance of being able to confirm any agreement with those establishments quickly so that researchers would be able to amend their PPLs appropriately and in good time was noted.

Establishment Licence holder's (PELh) Report (*not circulated*)

- 23/82 The PEL holder provided an oral report, and confirmed that the interim arrangements for the PEL report, which had previously been combined with the NVS report, would be established for the next meeting.
- 23/83 The report following the ASRU audit in October had been received shortly before the meeting with findings presented under three headings; minor concerns, actions required and recommendations. The PEL holder was pleased to report that the high standard of enrichments provided had been noted. The report would be shared for the next meeting.
- 23/84 Regarding the merger, arrangements for secondary availability would require University level agreements between institutions, which would be finalised after the visits and following users' discussions on options and assurances around biosecurity.
- 23/85 A response had been received from ASRU following a report of a non-compliance issue (SC18) in July 2023. Advisory letters had been sent to the University PEL holder and to the licence holder involved. The PEL holder welcomed the outcome but stressed the importance of having controls in place to avoid risk of recurrence.

Report from the Facilities Manager (*Received paper AWERB/23/19*)

- 23/86 The decision of the Programme Board was that SBS would close on 31 August. All research on the site would be supported until that date. It was anticipated that, although there might be an increase in work in the short term, the work would diminish from July until the closure date. A paper provided by the NVS and Facilities Manager to the Programme Board had included multiple options for cleaning or refurbishing CBS to accommodate work from SBS. The decision from the Programme Board was that whilst there was a need to invest in services, the funds were not currently available meaning that in the short term the high health status work would have to be located elsewhere. The ongoing discussions taking place with two nearby establishments were to accommodate this work until funds could be sourced and work undertaken to enable this to be undertaken on campus. The Facilities Manager and NVS had toured both external sites previously and a group of academics would visit one of the sites in the coming week. Users had indicated a preference for this location due to the possibility of setting up a separate satellite site to accommodate researchers from the University. If the site was found to meet researchers' needs a health screen would be done before taking the proposals forward. Now that the closure date was known, a revised technical staff structure was being discussed with a view to having it in place before the closure. A Clinical Professor in LIMR was reported to be keen to ensure his involvement in discussions at institutional level with the chosen establishment since the academics affected were in LIMR.
- 23/87 Questions arising in discussion were relating to work not requiring high health status facilities such as the potential for use of immunocompromised animals in CBS, the equipment available at the other establishment or requiring University equipment to be moved there. These were addressed by the Manager and NVS who confirmed that individual cases would have to be considered and agreed.

23/88 One of the minor findings in the ASRU audit was the inconsistent use of study plans. The Inspector had asked for these to be used and, having started to put these in place at the end of 2023, staff were able to confirm that this was already being done. Individuals had been contacted regarding some minor reporting requirements that were flagged. The recommendations were mostly straightforward but a recommendation regarding a policy for animal handling would require consideration by the NVS and Named Animal Care and Welfare Officers (NACWOS) over the coming months.

23/89 An update on staffing was provided.

NACWOs' Update

23/90 Since the last meeting work had slowed down for the festive break and no animal welfare issues had occurred. A meeting of the Animal Care and Welfare sub-group had taken place and a report would be brought to the meeting in March. ACTION: NACWOs

NC3R's Champion (*Received paper AWERB/23/20, 23/21*)

23/91 The NC3Rs ran a workshop in 2023 to consider the role and define a job description for a "3Rs Champion" and following that meeting the NC3Rs circulated a paper which had been provided to the Committee. The Committee was now asked to consider how the role could work within the University, whether the role could be added to someone's job description and how it could be supported. The NVS reported experience of a sub-group taking the initiative, rather than it being a role given to one individual, with group members able to take back activities to their sites or research groups and activities reported to the AWERB.

23/92 The consensus was that this would be the preferred option and during discussion it was considered that there was scope for researchers to focus more on the 3Rs and to embed them in their work. It was acknowledged that reduction and replacement were being considered by the licensees as part of the application and review process but there was scope for other aspects of the 3Rs such as refinements and enrichment to benefit from technical expertise.

23/93 The Chair proposed the possibility of identifying an academic to drive this with research colleagues along with technical input from the NACWOs. In considering the effectiveness of the AWERB and its reporting structures, a member suggested running the initiative through the University of Leeds Biomedical Sciences Committee (ULBSC), a more academically focussed body, with the Chair of that Committee reporting to the AWERB. Consideration was given as to who might take the role and the importance of that person having an interest in and commitment to the role was noted. In view of this, a suggestion was to consider recruiting an academic with an interest in the role rather than writing it into the role of the Chair, given the pressures of restructuring on the workload of the ULBSC Chair. The Committee agreed that further consideration might be needed to identify the right person for the role whilst maintaining reporting procedures. The Chair proposed that a NACWO and an academic should be appointed to the 3Rs Champion role with Refinement to be reported, as now, through the NACWOs' report and Reduction and Replacement via the ULBSC. The Chair also raised the possibility of this being written into the advert for the ULBSC Chair role, as a requirement for them to find someone to become the academic 3Rs Champion, with an appropriate number of hours to be allocated. ACTION: ULBSC representatives

Farm Veterinary Report (*Received papers AWERB/23/22, 23/23, 23/24*)

23/94 Having reviewed the reports from the Farm veterinarian the NVS confirmed that they seemed fairly good with no significant concerns.

User Group Report (*Received paper AWERB/23/25*)

23/95 Communication through the joint user groups had been successful but how these would operate in future to involve everyone and provide further opportunities for discussion would need to be considered. It would be necessary to maintain separate user groups for the time being, due to the likelihood of the groups having different interests and different matters to discuss. However, it was suggested that, upon closure of SBS, discussions should be brought under one user group which would report to both the AWERB and ULBSC.

23/96 The Facilities Manager reported that there would be new terms of reference for ULBSC and that the Director of Operations of FBS and FMH, who would be making the decisions in future, would sit on the Committee so that a direct link to the Deans and to users and the AWERB would be maintained.

Work at another establishment (*received papers*) NR/1

23/97 Having reviewed the document members had no concerns regarding the proposal for a PHD student to undertake work under a project held at another establishment.

Mid-term Reviews (*previously circulated*) MR63 and MR64

23/98 The licence holder had provided additional 3Rs information as requested for the two reviews brought forward from the previous meeting.

MR66, MR67, MR68 (*Received papers*)

23/99 The three new reviews had raised no concerns but the NVS had asked the licensees to expand on the 3Rs information provided and to expand on the details of Standard Condition 18 reports that had been submitted. Further information on refinements such as environmental enrichment improvements should also be included. The licensees should be asked to amend and re-submit their reviews for the meeting in March. ACTION: Administrator

Proposals for non-regulated work (*received papers*) NR/2, NR/3, NR/4

23/100 A number of safety and welfare aspects had been incorporated in the proposal and there were no welfare issues to raise. The NVS was happy with both proposals. The other proposals had been reviewed by the previous NVS.

23/101 For the AWERB to consider such proposals in future a revised form would be required which would focus only on the animal aspects of the work. Two members agreed to review and revise the form as part of the decision tree work. ACTION: Members concerned.

External meetings

23/34 A member reported that he had run webinars for commercial companies on the 12Rs framework which he had been working on with a college in South Africa and that he would be speaking at the Ugandan National Animal Ethics Committee. The NIO was asked to provide a link on the SharePoint site to NORECOPA's calendar of international activities.

23/35 The Facilities Manager, NIO/NTCO and the former NIO/HOLC had attended the LASA annual conference in November.

23/36 The AGM of the Northern Branch of the Institute of Animal Technologists (IAT) would be taking place in Leeds on 14 Feb at which a member had been invited to speak.

Other business

23/37 Due to ongoing confusion about who to contact following recent staff changes researchers would welcome updated information about who to contact regarding different activities. This information should be shared via email and on the SharePoint site. It was proposed that to keep these in focus

details should also be added to individual to email signatures for repeated messaging, possibly with a link to the SharePoint information.

ACTION: Facilities Manager and NIO.

Date of next meeting

23/38 The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 10am on March 13th, via MS Teams and the Chair proposed that another face-to-face meeting should be arranged to take place in May to include a buffet lunch.

ACTION: Administrator