Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

20/10 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Thursday 15 May 2020 at 10.00 am.

Present: [Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40]

Apologies: [Redacted. Sec.40]
[Redacted. Sec.40]

[Redacted. Sec.40] was welcomed to the meeting.

20/11 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 6 February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

20/12 Matters Arising

20/07 Discussion on ethics of service licences

[Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that he had been due to discuss this matter at an AWERB hub meeting at Harwell in April. Unfortunately, the meeting had been cancelled.
Given possible sensitivities it was felt that discussing this matter in person with hub members rather than via email was prudent. However, if it took too long to rearrange the meeting then consideration would be given to garnering views by different means.

20/13 Mid and End Term Reviews

The Board received a presentation from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of his current Project Licence – Making skeletal muscle less prone to disease mediated damage and ageing induced damage.

[Redacted. Sec.40] outlined the study and the following points were noted:

- The licence focussed on skeletal muscles prone to damage in respect of disease and ageing.
- A key muscle studied was the diaphragm which was important for life and quality of life, and which also deteriorated with age from 45/50 years.
- The study aimed to enrich understanding of muscle physiology and changes that occur in disease and ageing.
- The study had found that once one question had been answered another suite of questions had arisen in response.
- The study had demonstrated that it could slow down muscle wasting and increase muscle mass in mouse models. If this could be transferred to humans, this would be important for age related muscle loss.
- It had been found that increasing muscle mass led to defects in the testes – there was a balance between masculinity/muscularity that needed further investigation.
- The link on testicular function had been identified through the harvesting and targeted analysis of key organs. This approach to sampling had reduced the use of animals in the study as tissues were used for further analysis and data gathering. [Redacted. Sec.40] followed existing industry and medical SoP standards. Members of AWERB agreed that it would be good practice to share a protocol or jove video journal on this.
- The behaviour of mice was monitored through an activity cage. The study had shown that aged mice treated with the intervention behaved more inquisitively when placed in the cage, even after a period of acclimatisation. It was noted that new equipment was coming to the market that allowed monitoring of activity in home cage. It was agreed that this would be ideal as it would not involve removing the mouse from its home environment or litter in order to study behavioural effects. It was likely that this would become the new industry standards.

AWERB thanked [Redacted. Sec.40] for the presentation.

20/14 Update on the welfare of animals during the lockdown period

In respect of animal welfare during the lockdown period the AWERB noted that:

BRU

- The number of animals in the BRU had started to reduce before COVID-19
- [Redacted. Sec.40] continued to work on site each day
- BRU staffing had been spilt into two ensuring cover across the week
- Tasks had mainly focussed on maintenance, husbandry, and animal checks. Some occasional breeding had taken place
- A virtual visit had been undertaken by the [Redacted. Sec.40] who had expressed herself content with the inspection
- [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that she had physically visited the unit and was content with activity.
- A delivery of mice from [Redacted. Sec.40] had been received; the mice were in a poor condition. This matter was being followed up.
- Fish numbers had been reduced as much as possible without causing issue with the system/filters.

Farm

- [Redacted. Sec.40] had visited the Farm on 13.5.20 and had found everything to be in good condition with no welfare or health issues
- Work had carried on largely as normal during the lockdown period – 2 ongoing studies with cattle, 1 study on antibodies with Llamas. This mainly involved occasional blood collection
- [Redacted. Sec.40] had pulled out from a study on 50 calves during lockdown. By the time that work recommenced at [Redacted. Sec.40] it was likely that the animals would be too large to use. The [Redacted. Sec.40] had taken the animals into the normal management of the farm.
- The 60-day TB test had been undertaken with no positive cases but one inconclusive test. The test would be repeated again in 60 days. The herd would not be judged clear until it had passed two consecutive rounds of clear tests.

Members of AWERB thanked all those colleagues involved in maintaining animal welfare.

20/15 Update on transition to the BRU

The AWERB noted that the latest handover date for the Health and Life Sciences Building was 18 August 2020. It was anticipated that occupation would take place during the Autumn Term.
The [Redacted. Sec.40] had visited the building and had seen a procedure and holding room. A further virtual visit had been planned for today, but this had been postponed as the contractors had started verification and proving testing which could take up to a month. [Redacted. Sec.40] urged colleagues to fix a date for a further virtual visit as a matter or priority.

It was noted that racks and loose equipment were starting to be moved into the building.

Work on prioritising the order in which to move research was to be resumed.

20/16 Animal Research Policy

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported that the Policy had now been amended and would be placed on the website.

20/17 Dates of meetings in the Session 2020-21

Wednesday 9 September 2020 at 10.00 am

Thursday 4 February 2021 at 10.00 am

Thursday 13 February 2021 at 10.00 am