

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

22/10 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held via teams on Thursday 12 May 2022 at 10.30 am.

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

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

In attendance: [Redacted. Sec.40] (for Minute 22/13 only) and [Redacted. Sec.40] (for Minute 22/13 only)

Apologies were received from [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40], and [Redacted. Sec.40].

22/11 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held on 7 February 2022 were approved as a correct record.

22/12 Matters Arising

22/3 Input around animal free innovations

It was noted that [Redacted. Sec.40] had spoken with [Redacted. Sec.40] around animal free innovations. [Redacted. Sec.40] had shared her experience around developing an index on animal free innovations. A similar exercise could be undertaken at the University involving the relevant [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40]. In addition to making such a document available, consideration would be given to running a 3Rs event where the focus was on replacement.

[Redacted. Sec.40] advised that it was important that AWERB's interest in the replacement agenda was known by the relevant Schools. A key element would be communications. It was agreed that [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] and

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40], [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40] [Redacted. Sec.40] would discuss how best to take this forward.

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22/3 Mid-Term Review

It was noted that, whilst the meeting to discuss facilities permissions for the piggery had not yet taken place, work had now been completed on the unit. It was noted that the piggery would include long-term housing; [Redacted. Sec.40] was asked to consider this matter further.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

22/13 Mid-Term Review

The Board received a presentation from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of her current Project Licence – Modulating the ERK1/2 cascade in the heart and the following points and questions were noted:

- The study focused on human heart failure and studying the contractile cells that provide the force to pump the blood around the body.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] advised that consideration was being given to future work beyond this project, which would end shortly. It was likely that the research would move sideways, so the project would change. However, the procedures would remain similar, but probably without the major surgery.
- Reference had been made to variability in data quality as the team became more skilled in the experimental process. It was noted that there had been some changes within the team as well as interruptions due to the pandemic. It was reported that there was no scope within the regulations to justify more animal numbers due the inexperience of new colleagues. [Redacted. Sec.40] informed the AWERB that there would be no change in terms of animal numbers but there would be a change in approach, increased training, and that in addition the echo machine would shortly become obsolete.
- Could work be undertaken using cadavers? [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that initial training was undertaken using cadavers and that initial surgery training was undertaken on oranges.
- The mid-term review stated that 4 mice had experienced actual severity out of 385 used to date. [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that she was pleased with this low number stating that [Redacted. Sec.40] had been very helpful with advice and training on surgery.
- For a future PPL it was hoped to bring down the severity further.
- It was noted that the animals tended to lose weight after surgery. [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that this was also the result of the use of drugs as well.

- [Redacted. Sec.40] enquired whether there was anything that could be learnt from the project on work with mice that could be shared elsewhere.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] enquired as to how the mice felt after they recovered from surgery. [Redacted. Sec.40] reported that those on the Angio tensive model would experience a condition similar to panic attacks whilst those on the other model would experience conditions of running around a lot, hence they burned calories and lost weight.

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

The AWERB received a presentation from [Redacted. Sec.40] in respect of his current Project Licence – Antibody production, and the following questions and points were noted:

- The PPL had started in December 2019 to raise antibody in a number of different animal species, but predominantly llamas and cattle.
- The work was offered as a technical service to partner organisations and other HEIs.
- Work undertaken in respect of the spike proteins of COVID-19 and its variants had been the subject of much media interest.
- Camels could be used under the licence but none had been used so far.
- AWERB sought to understand the figures quoted in the report of up to 80 procedures for llamas and cattle. [Redacted. Sec.40] confirmed that the llamas experienced no more than 8 procedures in each year. The figures quoted were an estimate because as a technical service it was not known how many requests would be made each year.
- The lived experience of the llamas varied depending on which project they were used for. Most partners would initially only use 1 llama in the beginning and then would gradually increase the numbers used. There was a mandatory 12-week rest period between procedures.
- A typical experience for a llama was an injection of antigen followed by a blood test, this would then be repeated up to three times, at the end of this cycle 500ml of blood would be drawn, followed by a rest period. The process for cattle was similar, except some work was terminal.
- Intra/transdermal delivery and use of a gene gun were areas of refinement.
- The llamas were housed in large paddocks alongside sheep. The herd had integrated well.
- In order to restrain the llamas during procedures a crush was used. The llamas were not wary of the procedures and readily followed a food bucket into the crush. The worst part of the experience for the animal was having 500ml of blood taken at the end of process which required them to stay still for approximately 10 minutes.

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

The AWERB agreed that it would be helpful to include a section on the review form on the lived experience. [Redacted. Sec.40] also offered to make some comments on the tone/language of the form.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40] and [Redacted. Sec.40]

22/14 Report from Technical Services

It was noted that:

- The first research animals into the new [Redacted. Sec.40] would be arriving on Friday the 13th of May. This meant that the final close down of AMS could begin. There were currently animals on study until July; researchers had been asked not to start anything which would go on after then.
- [Redacted. Sec.40] left the University in April; her replacement, [Redacted. Sec.40], would start 23 May.
- Technical Services had experienced a high turnover of all staff grades over the past 6-12 months and recruitment had been difficult, with the need to re-advertise jobs and only a small number of applicants. This was a sector wide issue.
- There was still a lack of phones in the [Redacted. Sec.40], this was making communication in and out difficult and was a potential safety issue. Mobiles were being used in the unit with essential numbers in them as a work around until DTS could come up with a more robust system.
- The Estates project team had provided a technical note about changing the way humidity was supplied to the [Redacted. Sec.40].

22/15 Home Office ASRU Compliance Audit

[Redacted. Sec.40] reported to the AWERB that the audit programme had been suspended due to issues in ASRU around capacity. It had been reported that the audits would be replaced by a requirement to produce compliance portfolios – guidance on producing these had been promised but not received.

AWERB noted that a sub-set of HEI ELHs had written to ASRU to express their dissatisfaction with The proposed changes – a response had been received from ASRU but no mention was made of restarting the audit programme.

In the meantime, recognising the need for compliance with any Home Office requirements, it had been agreed that a training programme would be run within the University for PPL (24 May 2022) and ELH/others (14 June 2022). This training would assist in developing compliance portfolios. AWERB noted that other aspects of changes at ASRU had been positive.

22/16 Future topics

It was suggested that an item on compassion fatigue and mental health challenges for those working around animals should be held at a future meeting. [Redacted. Sec.40] was asked to outline what specific training other organisations were undertaking.

Action: [Redacted. Sec.40]

Consideration should also be given to a future session on replacement.

22/17 Communications

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The AWERB noted that Communications were commissioning a science writer to update the Animal Research website including proper non-technical summaries, as well as a bit of a general spring clean and restructure. The University had also taken part in the UAR Mice in Research week activity, and would be completing their annual return on openness.

22/18 Any other business

- A section 18 report had been submitted in respect of a pig death. This was a standard condition of granting a project licence which stated that if an animal exceeded the severity limit of a project licence, then a report needed to be made to the Home Office. A post-mortem had been undertaken which did not establish a cause of death, but as the death had occurred after an antigen injection and blood test there was a requirement to report. It was noted that it was the Project Licence Holders responsibility to report under condition 18.
- The AWERB recorded its thanks to [Redacted. Sec.40].

22/19 Provisional Dates of meetings in the Session 2022-23

Thursday 29 September 2022 at 10.00 am

Monday 6 February 2023 at 10.00 am

Thursday 11 May 2023 at 10.00 am