

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)

19/18 A meeting of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) was held in Room G04 Henley Business School, Whiteknights House on Wednesday 11 September 2019 at 10.00 am.

Present: [Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]

Apologies: [Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]
[Redacted, Section 40]

[Redacted, Section 40]
Language Sciences
[Redacted, Section 40]

19/19 Minutes of the last meeting
The minutes of the last meeting held on 23 May 2019 were approved as a correct record.

19/20 Matters Arising
19/13 Severity Data

AWERB noted that the data was now available on the website. It was suggested that a definition of levels of severity for animal research procedures be detailed on the website.

Action: [Redacted, Section 40]

19/03 Workshop on the 3Rs

[Redacted, Section 40] reported that a date had been set for the workshop and that planning was in hand in relation to the speakers. AWERB requested that a further reminder be sent to colleagues, including [Redacted, Section 40], to remind them of the date and to encourage attendance.

Action: [Redacted, Section 40]

19/16 Mid Term and End of Contract Reviews

It was noted that [Redacted, Section 40] had circulated the form following the last AWERB.

19/21 Technical Services Report

The AWERB received the report and in particular noted:

- Groups in the BRU had started to perform surgery according to the new aseptic surgery SOP. This had been going well, but there continued to be some questions around certain elements of the SOP. Formal aseptic surgery training sessions for all staff undertaking this work would be organised. This training would need to be mandatory.
- A recruitment advert was out for a new j[Redacted, Section 40] to join the BRU team, and this should be filled by October 2019. It was confirmed that staffing was sufficient to resource both units during the handover period.
- The new unit was currently scheduled for handover in February 2020. Most of the new equipment was on order and ready for delivery later this year. [Redacted, Section 40] would attend training with the cage manufacturers in October. This would cover how to get the best use out of the equipment for animal welfare and usability.
- No one had come forward requesting amendments to their project licences in relation to increased animal numbers for the move. If these were needed later, they would be dealt with on a case by case basis.
- There was one further strain awaiting rederivation.
- Monthly status updates were being sent to users.

AWERB noted that [Redacted, Section 40] would give three months' notice of the handover date. Given the impending move colleagues were being advised not to start any long-term studies.

The [Redacted, Section 40] confirmed that he was in contact with the [Redacted, Section 40] on regard to any assurances required before the new BRU could be occupied.

19/22 BRU recent mouse death

The AWERB received a table paper from the [Redacted, Section 40]. It was reported that since the last AWERB no major health concerns had been identified during visits. There had, however been reports from some users that there had been 'unexplained' deaths in their mice, together with some other health issues. It was noted that [Redacted, Section 40] had requested further information in order to better investigate the issues.

The AWERB noted a summary of some issues reported:

- 1) Hydrocephalus occurred in a significant number of animals from a single litter at around the time of weaning. This was occasionally seen in animals on a C57Bl background and was likely to be congenital in origin.
- 2) Fighting or injury was reported on 14 occasions in June and July 2019. Aggression in laboratory mice was reported as a problem worldwide and was associated with gender, strain, and husbandry events. It was also clear that no single intervention would prevent aggression in all strains and a multimodal approach was needed. Staff within the BRU were employing multiple strategies for addressing this issue, including additional enrichment and reducing the frequency of cleaning out. However, it was likely that there would always be some aggressive encounters. It was the nature of group housed mice.
- 3) Sudden death or poor health resulting in the animals being culled was reported in 18 mice in the same time period. Of these, 11 were Ercc1 variants, all approximately 3 months old and several were from the same litter. Three were D2.MDX. Of the 18 reported incidents, 14 animals were female, 1 male, and 3 not recorded. This suggested that these deaths were related to the genotype, with an effect of gender also apparent.
- 4) A possible post-surgical complication was identified in one animal 36 hours after implantation of an osmotic minipump. The animal was then humanely killed. A post-mortem had been carried out and was inconclusive. The remaining mice in this cohort were found to be in good condition. The opinion of the [Redacted, Section 40] was that the most likely cause for this was a post-surgical complication.

The [Redacted, Section 40] had concluded that there was not an unknown infection in the BRU, the incidents documented above could all be attributed to more likely causes.

The [Redacted, Section 40] had recommended that two new standard operating procedures (SOP) be developed:

- i) An SOP for **recording incidents** to include a specific set of information to be captured. This should include the date, the date of birth of the animal, the genotype, the gender, the cage and/or animal ID, a description of the issue, the outcome for the animal, any post mortem findings, and any other relevant information such as cage changes or introduction of new individuals. This would ensure that the maximum amount of information was available to the [Redacted, Section 40] when trying to identify causal relationships.
- ii) An SOP for **management of animals that die unexpectedly** or develop signs of ill health during a study, to include a post-mortem examination and collection of samples for histology and

microbiology or PCR. These could be sent for analysis immediately or stored for evaluation at some future time point should it there be any questions about possible changes to animal health.

It was noted that the post-surgical complications seen were not attributable to a specific cause, but it was possible that they were associated with aseptic technique. The [Redacted, Section 40] expressed concern on her last visit over the standard of asepsis during surgical procedures. Compliance with the new SOP for aseptic surgery was therefore mandatory, although it must be recognised that some of the requirements represented an additional burden on research groups, and practises needed to be developed to make it easy for researchers to comply with the requirements.

AWERB requested that [Redacted, Section 40] follow up with [Redacted, Section 40] on the aseptic training. It was noted that a list of staff who should undertake the training had been produced. AWERB requested an update on progress on this matter mid-November 2019.

Action: [Redacted, Section 40]

It was suggested that the training would also be advantageous for those colleagues dealing with large animals.

AWERB noted that the number of unexplained deaths was very small as a percentage. Given that there was a belief among some users that there was an unknown infection in the BRU, members queried whether that was any communication that could be issued to counter this belief. The [Redacted, Section 40] agreed to consider this matter further outside of the meeting.

Action: [Redacted, Section 40]

19/23 Update on the new ASPel System

[Redacted, Section 40] demonstrated to the AWERB the new ASPel system. It was noted that there was some duplication in the system

[Redacted, Section 40] agreed to circulate the link to users, who would then be able to login and amend any corrections.

19/24 Any other business

[Redacted, Section 40] queried whether the figures on the Animal Research webpages should include those procedures undertaken for external licences as this was a significant figure for the Farm. [Redacted, Section 40] was asked to consider this matter further and how such information could be presented alongside the institutional figures.

19/25 Dates of meetings in the Session 2019-2020

Thursday 6 February 2020 at 10.00 am

Thursday 14 May 2020 at 10.00 am