

Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB)



10.00, 12th November 2024, in J0.3 Teaching Room and by Teams

Minutes

Present:	██████████	Chair
	████████████████████	
	██████████ – via Teams	PEL Holder
	██████████	
	██████████	NACWO, NIO, NTCO, HOLC
	██████████	NVS
	██████████	NACWO, NTCO, Clerk
	██████████	Scientific Member
	██████████ – via Teams	Lay member
	██████████	
	██████████	Lay member
	██████████ – via Teams	Lay member
	██████████	
	████████████████████	Statistician
Apologies:	██████████	Scientific Member
	████████████████████	

STANDING ITEMS

- 1. Apologies for absence**
Apologies were noted as above.
- 2. Quoracy**
The quorum was met.
- 3. Declarations of interest**
None reported.
- 4. Minutes**
Considered and approved: Paper A - the minutes of the meeting held on 20th August 2024.
- 5. Matters arising/actions**

Actions completed: █████ sent proposed Rehoming Policy to Governance, Legal and Assurance Services (GLAS) for review. █████ and █████ met with Director of GLAS to discuss.
Actions outstanding: █████ to prepare PowerPoint template for PPL applications.

PPL REVIEWS AND UPDATES

6. PPL renewal presentation (■■■)

Received and approved: Paper B - ■■■

■■■ prepared a presentation to the AWERB regarding their PPL renewal. The Committee noted that the presentation was very helpful and well-constructed.

Points of discussion included:

- Statistical considerations in estimating number of animals used for each protocol.
- Potential welfare consequences of visual defects and blindness in zebrafish.
- Potential welfare consequences of visual acuity tests and how they will be minimised.

■■■ addressed all questions and comments to the satisfaction of the Committee.

Decision made: Project Licence application approved by the Committee.

Action agreed: ■■■ to submit application to Home Office for approval.

7. Report from NIO/HOLC (■■■)

Received and considered: Paper C – NIO/HOLC report

- ■■■ has been added as an NTCO on the Establishment Licence.
- Home Office has extended assessment timeline for complex PPL applications to 55 working days (previously 40 working days).
- The structure of the ASPA enforcement process is under review, and during this time the timeline for processing Standard Condition 18 notifications has been extended to 20 working days (previously 10).
- Lay members are encouraged to register for the RSPCA Lay Members' Forum in December if they can. It was confirmed that this would be financially supported by the University.
- All facility staff will attend the IAT West Middlesex Branch Symposium in February 2025.

8. Report from NACWO/NTCO (■■■)

Received and considered: Paper D – NACWO/NTCO report

- Nine inductions have been conducted for new facility users.
- ■■■ and ■■■ to attend Laboratory Animal Science Association 61st Annual Meeting from 18th to 20th November and will be presenting a poster.
- One Standard Condition 18 notification form has been submitted when fish were found dead following fin clipping. Response from Home Office has not yet been received.
- An import of wild-type fish from ■■■ has been arranged in order to refresh the wild-type population which has seen a decline in breeding performance.
- One rack is now out of use due to technical issue. All fish have been relocated to a different rack and we are hoping that this issue will be resolved ASAP.
- Fish genotyped as wild-type have been used to expand our wild-type embryo production service – this is a good measure toward Reduction, as these fish would otherwise be euthanised.
- One user would like to use cadavers of wild-type fish (euthanised due to sickness or as surplus stock) for cell culture. This is noted as a Reduction as it removes the necessity to breed animals solely for tissue use and will facilitate Replacement by the creation of cell cultures.
- Existing Refinements such as physical enrichment continue.

9. Report from NVS (■■■)

Received and considered: Paper E – NVS report

- Health screening did not show any pathogens of concern, only expected opportunistic *Mycobacterium* spp. Further health screening will be carried out shortly.
- Fin clipping SOP has been reviewed and some changes made in light of Standard Condition 18 notification.

- Wild-type fish that were initially imported from [REDACTED] have shown a drop in fecundity. The offspring of these fish have also shown lower survival rates than other lines in the facility. An import is planned to replace this population with new fish from [REDACTED].
- A new dry diet designed for laboratory zebrafish is now being used and appears to be successful.

10. PEL Amendment: Rehoming of zebrafish ([REDACTED])

Received and considered: Papers F & G – Rehoming scheme proposal, [draft] Policy for the rehoming of zebrafish

- It had been proposed at the previous AWERB meeting that the Establishment Licence be amended to permit the rehoming of wild-type zebrafish.
- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] met with the Director of GLAS to discuss concerns raised in the previous AWERB meeting regarding legal liability in rehoming fish.
- GLAS advised that there is little to no legal risk regarding rehoming and that if anything were to go wrong with the process the ramifications would primarily be reputational only. Therefore, a communication plan will be put in place, on the advice of the Director of Communications.
- It was clarified which avenues will be pursued to recruit prospective new homes, including our web page, friends and family, and potentially social media which has been used successfully by other institutions.
- [REDACTED] explained that there are also plans to potentially develop a social media presence dedicated to the BRF which may also serve as a route for recruiting new owners, though this is a long-term plan. Members of the Committee noted that it would be useful to discuss this in a future AWERB meeting closer to the time. The plan would also have to be discussed with the Director of Communications prior to any page going live.

Decision made: Rehoming PEL amendment approved by Committee.

Action: [REDACTED] to submit application to Home Office to amend PEL.

Action: [REDACTED] to agree communication plan with Director of Communications

Other business

*Starred items not discussed unless notified to the Chair or Clerk in advance of the meeting.

11. [REDACTED] Audit ([REDACTED])

- There will be an internal audit carried out by the company [REDACTED]. This was planned for the day prior to this meeting but was postponed.
- It was clarified that the audit is not related to the Home Office and that it is being undertaken to provide reassurance to the Council that the BRF is running in a compliant manner and effectively.
- The audit appears to be focused largely on processes, record keeping and management.
- Feedback will be shared at the next AWERB as required.

12. AWERB Governance

- There have been discussions with Clerkenwell colleagues regarding governance of the AWERB and animal research. Though there is no animal research activity at Clerkenwell campus under ASPA, their non-ASPA research is overseen by their ethics committee.
- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have met with Clerkenwell colleagues to explain the AWERB processes and governance of animal research under ASPA. It has been decided that the AWERB will send reports to the ethics sub-committee annually, and that a member of this sub-committee ([REDACTED]) will be added as an AWERB member.
- Non-ASPA research undertaken at Clerkenwell site will also be reviewed by the AWERB.
- Concerns were raised that the merged City St Georges ethics committee may have limited understanding of animal research. It was clarified that a representative from the AWERB would provide updates to the research ethics sub-committee.

- This does not represent a change in governance, and the AWERB will remain the primary ethics committee reviewing animal research.

Action: [REDACTED] to invite [REDACTED] to join AWERB

13. *Dates of Future Meetings

TBC

14. Any Other Business

- Administrative support has been sought for AWERB meeting servicing. [REDACTED] will no longer be carrying out administrative AWERB duties once this is arranged.
- [REDACTED] provided a brief update from the PEL holders forum, including the restructuring of ASRU and future changes to the enforcement process.
- [REDACTED] will be attending the annual training for PEL holders taking place at the LASA meeting.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]