



# Caring for animals aiming for better science

EU GUIDANCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DIRECTIVE 2010/63/EU ON PROTECTION OF ANIMALS USED FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES

## ANIMAL WELFARE BODIES

### RECITAL 31

"Animal-welfare considerations should be given the highest priority in the context of animal keeping, breeding and use. Breeders, suppliers and users should therefore have an animal-welfare body in place with the primary task of focusing on giving advice on animal-welfare issues..."

### AN EFFECTIVE ANIMAL WELFARE BODY BENEFITS ANIMALS, SCIENCE AND STAFF BY...

- fostering a good culture of care and improving animal welfare – including improvements in housing, husbandry, breeding, care and use practices – and the quality of science;
- taking a lead role in promoting animal welfare and the responsible care and use of animals including advising on planned work and work in progress;
- providing a critical forum to ensure day-to-day application of the Three Rs;
- providing motivation and support for animal welfare and the Three Rs;
- providing advice on the project application process, in particular promotion of the Three Rs, with continued input as projects develop;
- being a main point of contact for any conflicts between animal welfare and science;
- improving communication between scientists and animal care takers/technicians;
- influencing management to ensure suitable resources to allow delivery of good science and welfare;
- providing for effective liaison with National Committee and promoting Laboratory Animal Science – through communication with external stakeholders;
- improving public confidence in the quality of scientific work and care provided to animals;
- contributing to an effective rehoming scheme and practices.

### HOW TO ACHIEVE AN EFFECTIVE ANIMAL WELFARE BODY

#### RESOURCES

The establishment needs to ensure that there are sufficient resources made available – this includes personnel being given sufficient time to devote to AWB functions (including meetings, actions and follow-ups), facilities for meetings and administrative support.

Unnecessary bureaucracy should be avoided by keeping activities appropriate to the establishment; use of existing tools; combination of formal and informal recording.

#### PERSONNEL /COMPETENCIES

Members, including the chair, need to have personal qualities that invite technical/scientific respect and have received appropriate induction training and CPD. They should be motivated and free from conflicts of interest during discussions – the latter requiring proper consideration and process put in place to avoid this.

AWB should have sufficient authority and visible management support – with close links and communication with senior management and strategically placed in the establishment organogram. Advice should be respected, accepted, implemented and followed up.

To help enforce the importance of the role on AWB by management, discussion on AWB roles should be included in induction programmes and periodic appraisals; Further support can be provided by competent authorities and through feedback on inspections. Published guidance on the role of and expectations on AWBs is helpful to increase awareness, recognition and visibility.

A gap-analysis of the required competencies (knowledge, skills and personal competencies) should form the basis of a selection process for AWB members. Support of external expertise may be valuable.

#### STRUCTURE

Structure should be proportionate to the complexity of the establishment. Consistency and continuity can be improved by overlapping membership terms.

#### COMMUNICATION/VISIBILITY WITHIN ORGANISATION

The operational processes and working modalities, including the goals and priorities of the AWB should be known to staff as should planned and scheduled meetings with agendas, recording of actions and follow up. Clear communication channels (formal and informal) are very important **within** and **outside** the establishment. Members and staff should be able to speak freely, without fear of reprisals

### DELIVERING THE TASKS OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE BODY

Each AWB should develop effective terms of reference, endorsed and visibly supported by the management, ensuring clarity on the roles and responsibilities, and level of authority to all staff.

#### 1. Advise the staff dealing with animals on matters related to the welfare of animals, in relation to their acquisition, accommodation, care and use

The AWB should be the forum at which new or revised practices relating to the care and use of animals can be considered and endorsed.

- ▶ Developing local policies and standards including standard operating procedures (SOP)s; e.g. by setting out guidance on the most refined methods for administration and sampling; severity assessment; management of adverse effects including harmful genetically altered (GA) phenotypes.
- ▶ Dissemination of information on standards and policies within the establishment; Improvements or changes in Three R practices need to be drawn to the attention of relevant personnel in a timely manner. Standing agenda items (e.g. health reports from the designated veterinarian) are considered useful to help disseminate information on new developments to improve the health and welfare of animals.

#### 2. Advise the staff on the application of the requirement of the Three Rs, and keep them informed of technical and scientific developments concerning the application of those requirements

The AWB can approach this task in a number of ways, for example by

- ▶ development of, and input to guidance on application of the Three Rs for inclusion in the Education and Training Framework, including CPD;
- ▶ identification and dissemination of good practice on the Three Rs e.g. improvement of experimental design and optimisation of group sizes;
- ▶ establishment of processes to recognise and reward Three R initiatives and the implementation of these in practice;
- ▶ interdisciplinary initiatives in the area of the Three Rs e.g. workshops bringing together *in vivo* and *in vitro* practitioners/experts to explore Three R possibilities;
- ▶ discussion and analysis to identify areas for future prioritisation for development of Three Rs solutions within the establishment;
- ▶ actively encouraging scientists, technicians and care staff to work together to develop and implement refinements.

#### 3. Establish and review internal operational processes as regards monitoring, reporting and followup in relation to the welfare of animals housed or used in the establishment

All establishments should have quality control procedures in place, including mechanisms for preventing recurrence of any problems which arise. The inclusion of specific animal welfare reviews should be considered in these procedures. Some suggestions that have worked successfully:

- ▶ specific AWB audits on projects/procedures;
- ▶ SOP on how non-compliance or welfare concerns found during audits are handled, recorded and reported;
- ▶ setting up of an (anonymous) reporting line to enable anyone to report animal welfare concerns outside of their direct management reporting line;
- ▶ periodic internal reviews of specific issues, for example, minimising animal surplus.

#### 4. Follow the development and outcome of projects, taking into account the effect on the animals used, and identify and advise as regards elements that further contribute to replacement, reduction and refinement

The AWB can impact positively, both on science and welfare, at all stages of a project. Initiatives can include pilot study reviews; mid-term project reviews, in particular for projects of longer duration, to ensure that any further opportunities for implementation of the Three Rs are taken; internal end-of-project assessment to assess the actual impact on the animals against those predicted, and to determine whether additional Three Rs opportunities can be identified for dissemination.

#### 5. Advise on rehoming schemes, including the appropriate socialisation of the animals to be rehomed

The AWB guidance should include information such as on

- ▶ Circumstances under which an animal might be rehomed;
- ▶ Identification of candidate animals for rehoming;
- ▶ Detailed socialisation programme;
- ▶ Identification of potential new owners and criteria on how to assess their suitability N.B. collaboration with animal charities, with expertise in rehoming schemes, has proved successful;
- ▶ Follow up programme, including advice to new owners where necessary.

#### 6. Other tasks to which the Animal Welfare Body may contribute

- ▶ Contributing to the education and training framework to ensure that the training and CPD provision remains current and appropriate – the AWB can help to identify issues for updates or refresher training;
- ▶ Contributing to the development and implementation of the establishment's communication strategy on animal use – both internal and external;
- ▶ Contributing to the prioritisation of resource allocations within establishments.

#### Role of Animal Welfare Body in promoting a good Culture of Care

Ensuring an appropriate culture of care is in everyone's interests, as it will promote improved animal welfare and therefore enhanced scientific outcomes, and give all those involved in the establishment confidence that delivering high quality animal care and use practices is an important priority.

The AWB is in ideal position to drive the culture of care, and should demonstrate effective leadership in this area. The AWB should ensure, in collaboration with senior management, that there are appropriate and regularly reviewed structures in place to promote a suitable culture of care. Further suggestions include:

- Encourage scientists to work with, and value the contribution of, animal care staff;
- Provide information on the role and functions of the AWB for new staff and encourage their contributions and participation in the work of AWB;
- Provide for on-going involvement of project authorisation holders in the AWB;
- Communicate with all staff (presentations/newsletters/web page) and spread the word about the Three Rs, welfare improvements, policy changes, roles of care staff, training persons and veterinarians, and the AWB itself.

"Welfare is put at the centre of operations"

"There is more exchange of best practices. Problems are identified, discussed and solutions are proposed."

"AWB has enabled more communication (formal and informal) between scientists, veterinarians and animal welfare staff enabling better awareness about various issues."

"AWB members are split in sub-groups to address specific areas. This approach allows in depth reviews of each area."

"AWB recognises local good practice through awards, sponsors 3Rs lectures, poster events."

\* Comments from the feedback for the Directive review (2016)