

**UNIVERSITY OF DUNDEE**  
**WELFARE AND ETHICAL USE OF ANIMALS COMMITTEE**  
**Committee Remit and Terms of Reference**

March 2024

## **1. Remit**

The Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee (WEC) is responsible to the University Court and is empowered to take decisions on the Court's behalf. Its remit is:

"To act on behalf of the Court in ensuring that the University meets its obligation under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (amended 2012 to comply with Directive/ 2010/63/EU), to discharge the functions of an Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body as required under that Act, and to determine policy on all matters relating to animals on University premises."

## **2. Terms of Reference**

The Committee's terms of reference within this remit shall be as follows:

1. to promote high standards of animal welfare in relation to the acquisition, accommodation, care and use of animals at the University;
2. to promote and advise members of the University in applying the "three Rs" (replacement, reduction and refinement) of animal use, consistent with good science, animal welfare and the provisions of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (amended 2012);
3. to review all applications for projects under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (amended 2012), and to advise the Establishment Licence Holder whether they should be approved for formal submission to the Home Office;
4. to conduct reviews of existing projects, taking into account the effect in the animals used; and to identify and advise on elements that could further contribute to the 3Rs, at such times as the law may require and the Committee see fit;
5. to review those projects that do not require legal approval, but use living animals (or animals killed specifically for the purpose) in research or teaching;
6. to review the supply of animals to other institutions and the use of animals in collaborative research projects with such institutions (i.e. projects where it is expected that the University will be identified in publications or patents);

7. to oversee the provision of appropriate training for all persons involved in the use of animals;
8. to provide a forum for discussion of issues relating to the care and use of animals (whether regulated by the Act or not) and to keep staff up to date with ethical advice, best practice and relevant legislation;
9. to establish and review management and operational processes for monitoring, reporting and follow-up in relations to the welfare of animals housed or used at the University.
10. to develop policy on the re-homing of animals;
11. to support named persons, and other staff dealing with animals, or animal welfare and ethical issues;
12. to help to promote a 'culture of care' within the University and, as appropriate, in the wider community.

### 3. Membership

The membership of the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee shall be as follows:

- Convener (appointed by the Court)\*
- Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS)\*
- Named Animal Care & Welfare Officers (NACWO)\*
- Project/personal licence holders, who should be senior researchers with the expertise to deal with the Committee's business\*
- Members whose professional activities do not involve the use of animals in research or teaching and who have never held Home Office personal or project licences\*
- One or more members of the University Court
- Establishment Licence-Holder
- School Managers of the School of Life Sciences and the School of Medicine;
- One or more independent members
- Director of Biological Services (DBS)
- Other members, co-opted as necessary

### Quorum

The membership categories starred (\*) above must be represented by at least one member to provide a quorum for resolving ethical opinions on applications for project licences or their amendment. A member of Court may act as the required non-scientific member of the Committee. The Convener and the Named Veterinary Surgeon shall have nominated deputies to attend on their behalf in cases of unavoidable absence.

Where applications for project licences and their amendment are being reviewed, the advice of at least two scientists will normally be sought, at least one of whom must be a member of the Committee.

The appointment of licence-holding and non-scientific members shall be the responsibility of the Convenor and shall be approved by the Court.

### Secretarial services

The Director of Biological Services shall be responsible for providing secretarial services for the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee.

## 4. Meetings

### Schedule

Four meetings of the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee shall be scheduled in person each year.

The Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee may decide to reschedule or cancel a meeting, or to hold further *ad hoc* meetings. In all cases, the arrangements for quorum described in section 3 shall apply.

### Standing items of business

Standing items of business at each meeting will include a discussion of the 3Rs, the training and competence of those working with animals and a report from the Named Veterinary Surgeon and NACWO on matters relating to animal welfare.

## 5. Conduct of business via electronic media

The Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee may choose to conduct various items of business by email or other electronic means, in the intervals between scheduled meetings. The relevant documents shall be circulated to all members of the Committee by the Director of Biological Services. Discussion, requests for further information and recommendations will be aired in an electronic discussion group to which all members of the Committee will belong. Any member of the Committee may request the Convenor to move the item of business to a scheduled or *ad hoc* meeting of the full Committee, instead of it being dealt with electronically in this manner. After a period of time not exceeding one month, the Director of Biological Services shall request substantive responses. For an opinion to be deemed to have been reached, such responses must have been received from a "quorum" group, similar to that required at physical meetings and comprising:

- The Convenor
- the Named Veterinary Surgeon
- one or more Named Animal Care & Welfare Officers

- one or more licence-holding members
- one or more non-scientific members

The Director of Biological Services shall report such outcomes to the next meeting of the Committee as well as record all communications in the committee SharePoint site.

## 6. Home Office Personal Licences

The holders of Home Office personal licences operate within the framework of project licences that have been subject to the ethical review process. Consideration of personal licence applications by the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee will therefore not normally be necessary. The Director of Biological Services shall screen all draft personal licence applications and will have the authority either to approve an application for submission to the Home Office or, having identified areas of concern, to refer the application to the Committee.

## 7. Home Office Project Licences

It is the expectation of the committee that the Principal Investigator leading a programme of work using animals to meet their scientific objectives will be the project licence holder. Any exception to this must be agreed by the School prior to being presented to the committee.

### Review

The Director of Biological Services and University Veterinarian Surgeon will review and comment on all licence applications or amendments prior to submission to the committee.

A sub-group of the Committee shall review each new project licence application and may request to meet each applicant to discuss. It will comprise, at a minimum:

- A member of the committee with expertise in working with animals in research such as Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer, Named Veterinary Surgeon, Training Coordinator, or an independent member
- Two scientists, one with expertise in the subject area

The sub-group will consolidate all comments and report its findings and recommendations to the Committee by email. In parallel, the application will be circulated to the whole Committee, as described in section 5. Formal ethical review will only be complete when the report from the sub-group has been received by the Committee and the stated quorum has reached a view.

When timing permits, applicants for project licences may instead be invited to appear at a scheduled meeting of the full Committee, to present their proposals and to answer questions, i.e. the provisions of section 5 will not apply.

Applications for secondary availabilities at the University for project licences held elsewhere shall be reviewed as described in section 5, where these are restricted to specific and non-contentious protocols.

The review of proposed amendments to project licences shall normally operate as described in section 5. Additionally, the Convenor, on receiving a request from a committee member, may elect to form a sub-group to meet the licence-holder in person and report back to the whole Committee as above.

Where a proposed licence amendment involves no substantial increase in animal numbers, no anticipated increase in severity, and no significant change in research objectives, then the required quorum shall reduce to:

- The Convenor
- the Named Veterinary Surgeon
- one or more Named Animal Care & Welfare Officers

The expectation is that such a "fast-track" review will normally take no more than two weeks to complete.

Where an application for a project licence, or for amendment to an existing licence, is one in which the Director of Biological Services has an interest, but it otherwise qualifies for review under the provisions of section 5, the documents shall be distributed on behalf of the Convenor, who will be responsible for gathering the responses and informing the Director of any decision.

## Submission

Project licence applications, as downloaded documents from the ASPeL e-licensing system, should be lodged with the Director of Biological Services and should be in a near-final state, having already been discussed when necessary, with all relevant persons including the Director, the Named Veterinary Surgeon and the relevant Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer. Applicants may also be required to provide, in consultation with the Director, additional summary information. The precise nature of the documentation to be used is a matter for the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, which shall issue detailed guidance notes for applicants.

## Opinions

The Committee will be expected to reach an opinion on an application normally within one month from the date of submission to electronic review, or within one month from the date of the meeting at which the application was discussed, whichever is applicable.

The Committee shall examine applications with reference to the likely welfare costs to the animals, the expected benefits of the work proposed and how these considerations balance. The Committee shall also satisfy itself that in the preparation of the proposal sufficient attention has been paid to the development and uptake of reduction, replacement, and

refinement alternatives in animal use (the "three Rs") and that experiments have been or will be designed competently.

The Committee may reach any of the following opinions in relation to individual project licence applications:

- full approval
- approval subject to specified conditions (which might include resubmission to a further meeting of the Committee)
- rejection

The Committee's opinion shall be communicated to the applicant in writing by the Director of Biological Services. If an application is rejected outright, reasons for the Committee's decision must also be given in writing.

## Appeals

The Establishment Licence-Holder is obliged to take the Committee's opinion into account when deciding whether or not to endorse an application for a project licence. Applicants whose proposals are not endorsed shall have the right of appeal. Notice of an appeal must be made by the applicant in writing to the Secretary of the University, who shall be responsible for appointing an appeal panel of not less than three persons, none of whom shall have been involved in the original opinion and including an external assessor from another establishment approved by the University Court. Appellants may elect to appear in person before the panel or alternatively to submit written comments. The appeal panel shall also receive a report on the case from the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee and may at its discretion invite persons with particular knowledge or expertise to give evidence. The decision of an appeal panel in relation to any appeal within the ethical review process shall be final and shall be communicated in writing to the appellant by the Establishment Licence-Holder.

## 8. Reviews of ongoing projects

When an application for a project licence is approved, the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee shall also decide in each case how frequently progress will be reviewed. In cases which are not regarded as unusual or contentious, a single review of the project will normally be specified. The Committee must indicate to the applicant, at the time of intimating approval of the project proposal, when reviews are expected to occur.

Reviews shall normally be held at the time(s) specified by the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee in approving the original licence application or, if it is considered helpful either to the applicant or to the Committee, when proposed amendments to the licence are submitted. If the licence-holder should decide to surrender the licence before its normal term, or to move to another institution, then the review shall be brought forward.

A review of an ongoing project may be conducted at any time, at the request of the Named Veterinary Surgeon, or the Named Animal Care and Welfare officer in the relevant facility.

Project licence holders will normally be required to submit a brief report, in a form to be determined by the Committee, on work carried out under the terms of the licence. The Committee shall also receive a copy of the project licence as currently in force, i.e. including all amendments to date, and such other documentation as it may require.

In conducting reviews, the Committee shall reassess the balance between the costs to the animals involved and the expected benefits of the work and will look for assurances that attention has continued to be given during the project to the application of the "three Rs".

In cases where the review exercise suggests to the Committee that modifications to a licence may be desirable, these should be agreed between the Committee and the licence-holder. If agreement cannot be reached, the Committee shall be able in its discretion to recommend to the Establishment Licence Holder that the availability of university facilities for the procedures in question should be withdrawn immediately. The project licence holder will have up to one month in which to exercise a right of appeal, as described in section 7.

The outcome of the review of an existing project licence within the ethical review process shall be communicated in writing to the licence-holder by the Director of Biological Services.

## **9. Non-Licensed use of animals**

The Director of Biological Services shall keep under review any use of animals on university premises, but for which Home Office licences are not required. The Director shall report any proposed new use or significantly changed use to the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee. The Committee shall either approve such use or, if it concludes that the ethical justification is insufficient, decide that the use be modified or discontinued.

## **10. Collaborations at other establishments (including overseas)**

The Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee shall establish arrangements for the review of projects that involve the use of animals at other institutions, including overseas and in which the University has a collaborative interest. The outcome of such a review will be communicated to the Dean of the relevant School, who will decide whether or not the University can support the project.

## **11. Annual statistics**

The Director of Biological Services shall provide to the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, normally on an annual basis, summary statistics as to the numbers and types of regulated procedures carried out under project licences held by members of the University.

The Director of Biological Services shall provide to the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, normally on an annual basis, summary statistics as to the numbers of wild-type animals killed for tissue harvest or some other non-regulated purpose.

## **12. Conflicts of interest**

Every member of the Committee shall declare any potential conflicts of interest, initially in a common format to be agreed on by the Committee, and at the beginning of each meeting they attend.

## **13. Minutes and reports**

Written minutes shall be kept of the proceedings of the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee. Regarding deliberations on project licence applications, it shall be sufficient to record final opinions without rehearsal in detail of the scientific and technical issues raised—unless these are intrinsically relevant to the decision. Reviews of existing licences should also be minuted in summary fashion, provided that all the substantive comments arising from the review are recorded. All such records (or relevant extracts) shall be made available to the Home Office Inspector on request.

The Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee shall report after each meeting to the University Court.

Records of documents submitted to the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, and of the outcomes of its deliberations, shall be kept for at least three years.

## **14. Concerns about animal welfare**

Any member of the University who has specific concerns about the use of animals, whether related to regulated procedures or to standards of care in university facilities, may raise them with the Establishment Licence Holder or with any member of the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee, or through the channels identified in the University's Public Interest Disclosure Code. Any such representation may be referred to the Welfare and Ethical Use of Animals Committee for consideration. In all instances a report to the Committee on the substance of the representation received, and any action taken in response, shall be made.