ANIMAL WELFARE BODIES

RECATAL 31

“Animal welfare considerations should be given the highest priority in the context of animal keeping, breeding and use. Ensuring, supplements and care should therefore have an animal welfare body in place to ensure the primary task of minimising the effect on animal welfare issues…

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

- Ensuring 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 forum to ensure due-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 mechanism 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 explicit 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 there are sufficient resources made available – this includes personnel being engaged to direct the 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 toxic, 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 education and training. 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 viable management support – with close links and communication with senior management and excellence plans of the establishment organisation. Advice should be respected, accepted, implemented and followed up.

To help ensure the importance of the role on AWB by management, discussion on AWB roles should be included in induction programmes and periodic appraisal. 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 appropriate 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 agencies, 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 as 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 related to the care and use of animals can be considered and endorsed.

• Developing local policies and standards including standard operating procedures (SOPs), 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

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 the 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 recognize 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 use and in vitro scientists to identify opportunities to resolve Animal R possibilities;
• Discussion and analysis to identify areas for future prioritisation for development of Three Rs solutions within the establishment.

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 project/procedures;
• SOP on how non-compliance or welfare concerns found during audits are handled (recorded and reported);
• strategies 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, minimal 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 initiative can include pilot study review, mid-term project reviews, in particular of projects of longer duration, to ensure that any further opportunities for implementation of the Three Rs are taken into account and 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. Find opportunities to 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. Collaboration with animal charities, with expertise in rehoming schemes, has proved successful;
- Follow-up programme, including advice to new owners where necessary.

6. Take links in 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 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 better scientific outcomes, and genuine support and engagement 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 the AWB;
- Provide for ongoing involvement of project authorization holders in the AWB;
- Encourage communication with all staff (presentations/newsletters/webpage) 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 rare issues.

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

Comments from the feedback of the Directive review (2016)

Source: http://europa.eu/animal-welfare