



AWERB-UK

Putting Ethics into the AWERB

A forum for UK AWERB members organised by RSPCA, LASA, LAVA and IAT
15 June 2017, central London

Most Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies (AWERBs), and establishments in general, devote considerable time to the Three Rs, which are concerned with the practical aspects regarding the use of animals; there is a great deal of factual information available to help implement these. However, AWERB members have consistently said that they find identification and consideration of ethical issues much more difficult. The definition of an 'ethical issue' can be unclear and seem more nebulous, and there may be very different interpretations of exactly what constitutes an ethical issue, both within the AWERB and within the establishment generally. It can therefore be difficult to identify and raise ethical concerns, either during project review or for discussion in other forums within the establishment. As a result, AWERBs may focus on the application of the Three Rs (which is of course very important) and not tackle the more difficult ethical questions. Nevertheless, 'ethics' should pervade all of the AWERB's tasks, and members have said that they would welcome information and advice to help them to more fully realise this aspect of the committee's work, and to promote more comprehensive ethical review within their own AWERBs and establishments.

This meeting aimed to assist with this issue through a series of presentations exploring the meaning and interpretation of 'ethics' from different perspectives within science, together with discussion sessions on topics that the organising societies felt presented their members with difficult ethical questions. It was attended by 96 participants representing a range of AWERB members including animal technologists, project licence holders, Named Persons, lay and independent members.

Introduction, setting out the aims of the day. Penny Hawkins, RSPCA Click here for slides				
Morning session - Definitions and contexts – chaired by Ken Applebee (IAT)				
What do we mean by ethics? Jane Smith, Boyd Group Click here				
Does the current culture of scientific research encourage considered ethical review and reflection? James Parry, UK Research Integrity Office Click here				
Ethics in a parallel field. Mark Sheehan, Oxford Biomedical Research Centre Click here				
Afternoon session - Ethics in practice - chaired by Katherine Knight (ASRU)				
Five parallel breakout discussions on topics involving the application of practical ethics, chaired by the organisers.				
Ethics of projects that have already been funded and/or are being done abroad or elsewhere in the UK – <i>Establishment Licence Holders' Forum</i> Click here	Ethics of research into diseases or conditions affecting only a small percentage of the population – <i>LASA</i> Click here	Ethics of using 'special species'. What makes these 'special' and what does it mean in principle and practice? – <i>LAVA</i> Click here	Emotional well-being of staff involved in the killing of animals, e.g. in the context of genetically altered animal use – <i>IAT</i> Click here	Ethics of using new or recently developed technologies, e.g. optogenetics – <i>RSPCA</i> Click here
Putting ethics into project licence review. Virginia Warren, University of Cambridge Click here for slides and here for notes				
Scientist's perspective on ethics. James Stewart, University of Liverpool Click here				



The meeting and its workshops were organised by:

Penny Hawkins & Maggy Jennings - RSPCA

Anne-Marie Farmer - LASA

Ken Applebee - IAT

Ute Weyer & Ngaire Dennison - LAVA

Anne-Marie Farmer - University of Cambridge

Jane Smith - The Boyd Group

Charles Gentry - Establishment Licence Holders' Forum

Please contact research.animals@rspca.org.uk if you would like any further information about this meeting, or you have suggestions for future topics.