

Technician review body

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Introduction

In April 2022, in response to an initiative for a technician arm of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB), a new group was established, the Technician Review Body (TRB), comprising of technicians from the BRU. The group has been an extreme success and operates autonomously with their own Terms of Reference and working methods and the group has a rotational Chair and Secretary.

Our aim

This group was set up with the aim of introducing technicians to AWERB meetings to gain experience of how the AWERB works within Cancer Research UK Cambridge Institute (CRUK CI). This was part of their training and career development and subsequently to contribute to the AWERB function. This training is translated into useful tools that will aid the technician's confidence with the care and welfare of the animals.

Terms of reference

Main objectives:

- To review project licences provided by AWERB.
- To review endpoints within active project licences.
- To provide information for the retrospective review of project licenses to the AWERB.
- To recommend and promote good practice for Animal Welfare, housing and enrichment.
- To review Animal Welfare within protocols on provided project licences.
- To establish the voices of Animal Technicians within CRUK CI.
- To present views and opinions on AWERB topics and 3Rs' projects.

Achievements

The TRB has reviewed multiple project licence requests over the last two years.

We have provided invaluable feedback to the project licence holders and AWERB committee.

Consequently, we reviewed a PPL amendment that is based off-site (CRUK secondary availability) of which one of our comments was heavily discussed at the UBS AWERB and the PPL application revised. This exhibits the impact that the TRB has made externally within other facilities, even though the group is only in its infancy.

We have revised our process to pinpoint various discussions within the team of various disciplines. This has given the confidence to technicians to provide their peers with support on reading a PPL and humane endpoints.

Following the recent LASA forum article, the TRB inclusion has attracted external interest from external institutions. This is a testament to the importance of the body's work and its potential to improve the welfare of the animals and empower technicians with confidence within their roles.

Animal Welfare impact

One of our goals is to guarantee the humane endpoints in PPLs are clear and concise to ensure that the mice can reach their scientific endpoint within the legal and ethical boundaries.

This enables the technicians to decipher the PPL and make decisions on the ground, reducing any unnecessary pain or distress. This contributes to improving Animal Welfare standards within the BRU.

Looking to the future

In the future, as a team, we are bursting with ideas and plans on how to expand the groups potential. These plans include:

- Outreach with other animal facilities to encourage the creation of TRB initiatives within their own facility.
- Legislation training for technicians (PEL, PPL severities, ASPA/code of practice).
- Reviewing procedures that are novel to the institute.
- Developing a 3Rs project support system.

References

“The TRB is an excellent initiative that fits in very well with our aims in a Culture of Care where we try to bring different perspectives from researchers and animal carers together for improved welfare and better science. This work also fits in very well with the BRU vision of setting standards and leading the way and I understand that there has been interest from other institutions in getting something similar off the ground. Really well done and congratulations on your excellent contribution to PPL reviews and helping to make applications stronger and welfare better.”

– Brendan Doe, BRU Core head

“I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the TRB for their work over the last year, and congratulations on how the functioning of the team has developed. It is now invaluable. It makes the task for non-animal technician members of the PPL Writing Support Team so much easier in the knowledge that all aspects of detailing adverse effects for PPL applicants will be expertly reviewed by those who have direct experience. In addition, the team offers pertinent advice on other points in applications. They have undoubtedly helped to improve the quality of CI PPL applications.”

– Davina Honess, retired scientist AWERB

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