

SEVENTH REPORT OF

THE ANIMAL WELFARE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

August 2004

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ANIMAL WELFARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Introduction

1. This is the seventh report of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC) which was established in 1996. The terms of reference are approved by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and are attached to this report at Annex A.
2. The Committee reports to the Chief Scientific Adviser and is an independent group of specialist advisers acting in the public interest.
3. The Committee's report is published in order to inform Parliament and the public.
4. This seventh report covers the period from March 1st 2002 to July 31st 2003, which is a longer period than usual due, in part, to the appointment of a new chairman though already a committee member, and the appointment of two new members late in 2002. Their appointment increases the diversity of professional qualification, experience and expertise available to AWAC.
5. This report is being circulated to a list of interested individuals and organisations as well as being placed in the library of the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Meetings and operation of the Committee

6. Notwithstanding the appointment of two new members late in 2002, visits to Dstl Porton were undertaken on November 28th 2002, April 10th 2003 and July 31st 2003, and to QinetiQ, Portsmouth on November 29th 2002. The Committee also visited a leading laboratory animal breeding establishment to keep themselves abreast of new husbandry techniques. Further, individual members of AWAC have attended a number of meetings of the Ethical Review Committee at Dstl Porton.
7. The Committee's full visits usually comprise of a brief from the staff on any recent changes of management, structure and staff followed by presentations and discussions on specific programmes of research. Particular emphasis has been placed on visiting all the animal accommodation in order to observe current husbandry practices in order that the Committee can advise on appropriate changes to achieve best practice.
8. It is important to understand that the Committee does not have a regulatory function and is not involved in a programme of inspection to ensure compliance with UK or European legislation. The Committee's role is to provide advice on welfare matters to the Chief Scientific Advisor (MOD). In addition, AWAC provides advice and feedback to management, scientists and animal care staff during site visits.
9. The principles of the 3R's (that is to adopt wherever possible, measures for the

Reduction of animal numbers in experiments, Refinement of procedures and husbandry and Replacement with non-animal alternatives) are now well accepted as a framework to improve laboratory animal welfare, and the Committee uses these principles as a basis for its enquiries during visits and meetings.

Outturns

10. The Committee is pleased to record that all its advice and recommendations have been accepted and acted upon by the staff at Dstl Porton and at Qinetiq Alverstoke.
11. The Committee will seek to increase the number of regular visits to Dstl Porton and to increase the duration of each visit in order to better our knowledge and understanding of the on-going work and so be able to improve the quality of the advice given.
12. Attendance at a number of the meetings of the Ethical Review Committee at Dstl Porton has been worthwhile and will endeavour to attend all such meetings in future. AWAC is pleased to report that the Ethical Review Process appears to work well.

Numbers of procedures in animals carried out in 2001 and 2002

13. Previous reports of AWAC have contained detailed comments on the number of procedures carried out on animals at Dstl Porton and at Qinetiq and the number of animals used for the first time. The number of laboratory animals used in the various experimental procedures is not a direct responsibility of AWAC and thus this report does not contain any such comments as in the past.
14. However, in order that the reader can compare this report with previous editions we have included statistics provided by Dstl, on experimental usage at Annex B and commentary on animal usage at Annex C.

Future activities

15. The committee members have now been working together for a year. In the coming year it will continue to pursue current lines of enquiry, adapted as necessary, in order that it can fulfil its terms of reference to the full. These will include
 - animal care and husbandry
 - the training of animals, especially primates
 - 3R's audit
 - comprehensive attendance at ERC meetings
 - a review of staff training
 - review of scientific publications from Dstl Porton

Brian Hoskin (Chairman)
Dr Derek Forbes
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Dr Roger Yates