Director’s Notes

Animal Care Services continues to provide high quality compliant housing and care for laboratory animals at UWA – even sheep and pigs can be counted as laboratory animals.

It is remarkable to consider that, within our facilities, ACS staff care for various animals that themselves not only have a range of conditions being treated and assessed but which also hold the cryptic keys to advances in human treatments and cures.

ACS staff do an outstanding job in managing, supporting and assisting in all of these projects and deserve our thanks and praise for their efforts.

Shenton Park Fire

One of our worst-case-scenario risks became a real life scenario recently when the Shenton Park bushland became engulfed in flames and both the BRSF and the BRF came under direct threat and fire front line attack.

Through the response of key ACS staff and in an amazing cooperative spirit with the controlling authorities, minimal damage was done to the facilities themselves and there was no loss of research animals.

My thanks again extend to all those who assisted and contributed on the day at a time which was critical and tense. The effort into the prior planning and the execution of our plans for such an event helped ensure that the event was not of a catastrophic nature.

ACS received AAALAC accreditation in June after achieving a remarkable and comprehensive program review summary based on the attention being given to facilities management and safety, veterinary over-sight, welfare care and ethical review. We are the first Australian laboratory animal facility to achieve this accreditation!
**Tick@lab update**

The ACS animal facilities management software package ‘tick@lab’ went live in December and we have been expanding the system to include all of the ACS holdings of animals within all our facilities.

There have been virtually no commissioning issues. We now able to ‘report’ on the status of the facilities in real time and have begun to provide electronic versions of the various reports that are required of us. In the coming months, other features of the package will be available for use by other stakeholders as the roll out proceeds.

‘Tick@Lab’ is continuing to be expanded across ACS facilities. All animals in the Large Animal Facility and the Biomedical Research Support Facility are now in the database and these facilities are using tick@lab to track animal movement, usage and health issues. Cage cards are also able to be printed to save technician time and ensure accuracy of information.

The current focus is on uploading data for all of the animals within the Biomedical Research Facility. A second phase of the project is also progressing which will focus on customising the protocol module so that protocols can be uploaded following approval as well as the configuration of the accounting module to generate accurate agistment accounts.

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**2013 AALAS Conference**

The 64th American Association for Laboratory Animal Science Meeting was held in Baltimore USA with the conference theme being ‘Gene and Cell-Based Models and Therapies.’

Facility management issues discussed included:

*The increasing complexity of cage wash and preparation area within facilities in meeting challenges* as they are becoming the hub of facility chemical, biological, environmental and ergonomic hazards. The responsibilities for managing these areas and the need for efficient processes are increasing due to changing technologies (including robotics) being used. Training requirements for personnel working in these areas have increased considerably with an equation made of the training requirements to be an expert in any profession equalling 10,000 hours (5 years).

*Advances being made with equipment:* Equipment developers are working with the industry towards systems aimed at improvements to facility efficiencies while maintaining the highest care and husbandry standards. An example is systems being designed using cameras to electronically scan cages reducing the disturbance to animals during cage checking processes and helping with ergonomic issues.

*Animal Facility Design, Processes, Decisions and Technology Workshop:* This included a session on current trends within the industry including (and of importance to UWA) the need for facilities to be designed with the capability to adapt to changes in research direction and technologies. AAALAC certification requirements can be in addition to standard building codes and need to be taken into consideration.

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**Did you know?**

UWA staff can request Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in support of ethics applications by accessing the SOP list on our website [www.research.uwa.edu.au/animal-services](http://www.research.uwa.edu.au/animal-services) and then emailing SOP requests to geraldine.stewart@uwa.edu.au
Quality Control

The reporting of any unplanned / unexpected animal deaths is mandatory by both ACS and research staff.

The process is

- ACS staff complete a Post Mortem Form (which starts the post mortem process)
- Researchers send a completed Notification of Animal Death form to the Animal Ethics Office.

[Note: Both forms are under review and will be reformatted in the near future.]

The rationale for this is ACS staff responsibility to feed, water and environmentally house all animals under our care (as per the NH&MRC Code, 2013 edition) and to maintain good animal welfare standards (as per State and Federal acts).

ACS staff are obligated to be generally aware of research staff performing their animal studies under animal ethics approvals within their facilities and communication and support is invaluable between staff and researchers.

Being aware of any unplanned / unexpected animal deaths that may occur in the course of their study is therefore a necessary requirement for both good animal welfare outcomes and compliance.

Staff Profile: BRF Coordinator


Working in all facilities, Lisa was responsible for the care of rats, mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, cane toads, pigs, chickens, sheep, emus, quokkas and tammar wallabies.

After leaving UWA to travel, Lisa took up a position with the Animal Research Centre at the Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and progressed to manage the facility for 13 years. In this role, she oversaw transition into a new building which housed rats, mice and rabbits. Towards the end of this period, she was involved in the design of the new facility that will be part of the same building in which the new Children’s Hospital will be located on the Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital site.

Lisa has been back with UWA Animal Care Services since September 2013 as Coordinator of the Biological Research Facility.

Welcome to our new staff

Biomedical Research Facility:
Jenny Ullah, Claudia Allan, Robert Morales Hernandez, Lindsay Abbott.

Biological Resources Support Facility:
Samantha Dudson, Anneliese Lange, Rachel Asquith, Stephanie Payne

M Block:
Zita Juhas, Michael Pethick, Ashleigh Smith, Gloria Nock,
Connie James, Soraya Mackay-Koelen.
Photographic approvals

If you need to take photos of techniques, animals, etc. in your research protocol, please complete a ‘Use of Photographic Equipment To Capture Images’ form and send it to geraldine.stewart@uwa.edu.au. The form is attached to the standard operating procedure ‘Use of Photographic Equipment in Animal Care Services facilities’ on our website.

AEC Applications

Please only use the most up-to-date forms for new ethics applications and amendments. They are located at http://www.research.uwa.edu.au/staff/forms/animals.

To get your new ethics application signed off by ACS (i.e. before submitting it to the Animal Ethics Office), complete the following at least 4 weeks before the AEC submission deadline: meet with the technician-in-charge of the facility in which you wish to house your animals, and then call the Admin Officer to arrange a subsequent meeting with the Director, ACS for final questions regarding your application. The ACS approval process webpage provides further details.

Minor and major amendments

Minor amendments need only be signed by the Technician-in-Charge.

Major amendments require the signatures of the Technician-in-Charge and then the Director, ACS.

Questions regarding any of the above may be directed to the Administrative Officer, Geraldine Stewart, on 6488 6606.

Animal well-being is everyone’s responsibility—report concerns immediately.