A dozen woolly bundles of joy arrive at the Shenton Park Facility

Kristen Nowak and Nigel Laing

Our muscular dystrophy sheep flock recently almost doubled in size with the arrival of 12 cute lambs – one singleton, four pairs of twins and one set of triplets. This is a wonderful boost to our internationally unique flock. We are hoping that through identification of the disease gene causing naturally occurring muscular dystrophy we will be able to glean information relevant to patients with muscular dystrophy. Ultimately we aim to trial potential therapies in affected sheep, and study why, like humans, only certain skeletal muscles in the sheep are wasted by the disease, whereas other muscles remain intact.

Last year ‘love was in the air’ when our muscular dystrophy rams (who were born following embryo transfer procedures in 2011) spent some quality time with normal ewes – resulting in six pregnancies!

We are truly grateful to have these 12 new additions, all carriers for muscular dystrophy, and they are here due to the superb care by UWA’s Animal Care Services staff. In January the flock was endangered by the Shenton Park Facility fire. Whilst the praises of diligent protector Christo the alpaca have already been sung, we know that this unique flock still exists due to the vital heroic actions of Mr Peter Cowl, who raced to the facility that day and moved the sheep. Our sincere thanks also go to all the other UWA ACS staff that went above and beyond that day, including veterinarian Dr Lauren Callahan.

During the recent lambing period, another veterinarian, Dr Tabita Tan, took on the role of skilled obstetrician for one of our ewes, strongly supported by other ACS staff. This ewe was thought to be carrying twins and was noted to be in labour one morning. The ACS staff who were observing her became worried that her labour wasn’t progressing as quickly as expected. Dr Tan was summoned and proceeded to assist the ewe to deliver the lamb which was the wrong way round. After helping deliver the second lamb, Tabita then surprised everyone when she checked and discovered a third lamb, which was also successfully delivered! Sheep Research Facility Technician-in-charge, Ms Keren Muthsam, and colleagues have bottle fed one of these triplets, affectionately called “Humphrey”, since he was born. Our sincere gratitude extends to all ACS staff helping care for our sheep, with their roles crucial to our research project.

Are you a first time author of a UWA AEC application?

Recently, Professor Robyn Owens, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) announced that UWA was introducing a new targeted requirement for all first time applications by new principal authors:

“An application prepared by a principal author (this need not be the chief investigator) who has not previously engaged with the UWA animal ethics system must undergo preparatory review by an Animal Welfare and Veterinary Advisor (AWVA) prior to submission to the AEC. Such authors are strongly encouraged to take advice from an AWVA before drafting their application. Unless the AEC determines that additional measures are needed, this compulsory review step applies only to the principal author’s first application”

This ‘Hints and Tips’ workshop is considered to be the first step in this process and all first time applicants should attend. See page 4 for more details.

For further information and advice contact the Animal Welfare and Veterinary Advisors:
Dr Deirdre Bourke (Tel: 6488 4700) and Dr Melissa Lindeman (Tel: 6488 4549)
Email: awva-vetservices@uwa.edu.au

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Frequently Asked Questions
There is occasionally uncertainty about the processes for submitting amendments to approved Animal Ethics Committee (AEC) applications. The Animal Welfare Officer has provided this summary of the frequently asked questions:

There are no specified limits on the number of amendments to an AEC approved breeding, research or teaching protocol, providing the overall aims of the project remain the same. The total number of major amendments permitted per protocol will be at the discretion of the AEC on a case-by-case basis.

Quick turnaround for minor amendments. Minor amendments can be processed out-of-session by the Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) or the AEC Chair, as delegated authorities of the Animal Ethic Committee, and are usually completed on the same or the following day. Minor amendments include adjustments that are not expected to increase the welfare impost to the animals. These include changes to housing, location, sex, euthanasia method, method of transport, sample collection times (within a set time frame), non-surgical procedure (e.g. less frequent or less invasive), monitoring regime and/or forms. It can also include addition of less than 10% to animal numbers and extension to approval period of up to three months (first time only).

A specific minor amendment form is required for change of personnel, transfer of animals between AEC protocols and to request additional animals for training investigators.

A major amendment is required for adjustments that are likely to increase the welfare impost on animals. This amendment will go to a full meeting of the AEC and will need to be submitted by the relevant submission closing date. These include:
- Increase in animal numbers
- Change of strain within a species
- Increase in the invasiveness of a non-surgical or surgical procedure
- Addition or substitution of a non-surgical or surgical procedure
- Extension of an approval period greater than 3 months (evidence of funding required)

Please consult with the Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) at awo@uwa.edu.au or Animal Welfare and Veterinary Advisor (AWVA) awva-vetservices@uwa.edu.au prior to lodging your application.

Forms are available at www.research.uwa.edu.au/staff/forms/animals

Amendment of AEC applications

Have your say!

Be part of a Global Fish Welfare Dialogue

Issues Facing Fish and Aquatic Animal Welfare.

A webinar was held in April to begin a 6-month international conversation (the Fish Welfare Dialogue) on numerous issues concerning the human-animal relationship with aquatic animals. It will introduce some of the important issues (from science to philosophy) that affect how non-governmental organisations, governments, animal owners and society at large, might address the welfare of aquatic animals, particularly finfish and invertebrates.

The Fish Welfare Dialogue is continuing through web-based discussion forums, with the hope of developing realistic, practical and optimal approaches for the welfare of all aquatic animals and the benefit of mankind. These discussion forums will serve as the basis for developing aquatic animal welfare metrics at an International Conference on Fish Welfare in Munich, Germany in September 2014.

So register now at www.fishwelfare.org
In 1959, Russell and Burch introduced the principles of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the 3Rs) in animal research. Now the 3Rs are the internationally accepted ethical framework for the humane use of animals in scientific studies.

The National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) website (www.nc3rs.org.uk/page.asp?id=7) is an excellent source of information about the 3Rs, including the definitions outlined below.

Replacement refers to methods that avoid or replace the use of animals in an area that they would otherwise be used. This can be "absolute" i.e. using methods that don’t use animals at any time e.g. computer modelling; human volunteers or in vitro methodologies; utilising established human or animal cell lines; animal cells, tissues and organs from animals killed by a humane method and abattoir material from the meat industry.

Replacement can also be made by using alternate animal models e.g. invertebrates, such as Drosophila (fruit fly) and nematode worms; immature forms of vertebrates, such as mammal, bird and reptile embryos, up to the last third of their gestation or incubation period; larval forms of amphibians and fish, until the stage where they become capable of independent feeding; cephalopods until the point at which they hatch.

Reduction refers to methods which minimise animal use and enable researchers to obtain comparable levels of information from fewer animals or to obtain more information from the same number of animals, thereby reducing future use of animals.

Examples of reduction methods include improved experimental design and statistical analysis; using imaging techniques to image at multiple time points and the sharing of data and resources.

Refinement refers to improvements to scientific procedures and husbandry which minimise actual or potential pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm and/or improve animal welfare in situations where the use of animals is unavoidable. Refinement applies to the lifetime experience of the animal. There is evidence that refinement not only benefits animals, but can also improve the quality of research findings.

Examples of refinement methods include non-invasive techniques, appropriate anaesthetic and analgesic regimes for pain relief, training animals to voluntarily co-operate with procedures and providing environmental enrichment.

The NC3Rs website provides an Information Portal (www.nc3rs.org.uk/landing.asp?id=38) with links to online databases and journal articles that provide information to help researchers apply the 3Rs. In addition there are links to past NC3Rs 3Rs Prize Winners at www.nc3rs.org.uk/page.asp?id=1897

The Universities Federation for Animal Welfare (UFAW) also provides a selection of resources and websites relevant to the 3Rs and animal in research. See www.ufaw.org.uk/links.php#link01

Applications must be submitted by 1 July 2014.

For further information regarding this award, please view the 3Rs Animal Ethics Award 2014 webpage or via www.research.uwa.edu.au/staff/animals

The 3Rs Award for 2013, was won by research associate Ms Tracy Mann and Professor Peter Henry. For further details please see UWA News November 2013.

The 3Rs Award 2014

Nominations for the 3Rs Animal Ethics Award 2014 are now open.

This award is an initiative by Professor Robyn Owens, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), to recognise an individual or group who has made an outstanding contribution to the field of the 3Rs (Reduction, Replacement and Refinement) and animal welfare at The University of Western Australia. The winner of the award will receive a payment of $5000 to their PG account.
Training opportunities

Every Wednesday from 12.30pm to 1.30pm:
Hints and Tips on completing an AEC application
The Veterinary Services Office
Rm 2.09 Main Administration Building. See map.
RSVP to: awva-vetservices@uwa.edu.au

26 to 27 June 2014:
Handling & Husbandry of Laboratory Mice
Box Hill Institute, Victoria. A two-day course ideal for new animal technicians or researchers.
www.bhtafe.edu.au/courses/shortcourses/Pages/BAS08.aspx

3 to 4 July 2014:
Perform Aseptic Surgery
Box Hill Institute, Victoria. A two-day course that teaches participants aseptic techniques in rodents.
www.bhtafe.edu.au/courses/shortcourses/Pages/AAS01.aspx

27 to 29 July 2014:
The Australian and New Zealand Council for the care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) 2014 Conference
Mixing it up: Ethics, Science and Adventure Tourism
Queenstown, New Zealand.
http://anzccart2014.eventbrite.co.nz

24 to 26 September 2014:
The Australian and New Zealand Laboratory Animal Association (ANZLAA) Conference in Canberra.
www.anzlaaconference.org/Conf2013/defaultExpression.aspx

Research Services renamed

As part of the functional alignment of professional service divisions at UWA, Research Services will now be known as the Office of Research Enterprise. It is the intention of this office to continue to provide high quality professional and expert support services to facilitate excellence in research.

Under this new banner, the Research Ethics and Biosafety Office is now renamed Research Integrity and here are our contact details:

Animal Welfare Officers
Dr Chris Mayberry and Dr Andy Keefe
Tel: 6488 7882 or 0428 021 529
Email: awo@uwa.edu.au

Animal Ethics Office
Ms Denise Hockley, Tel: 6488 8775
Ms Jennifer Grant, Tel: 6488 2516
Ms Jean Needle, Tel: 6488 3033
Email: aeo@uwa.edu.au

Animal Welfare and Veterinary Advisors
Dr Deirdre Bourke 6488 4700
Dr Melissa Lindeman 6488 4549
Email: awva-vetservices@uwa.edu.au
research.uwa.edu.au/staff/animals