

One of the roundtables discussed the topic of 'training on the ethics of doing experiments with animals' as part of the afternoon workshops. The discussion was facilitated by Dr Madeleine Campbell (Royal Veterinary College) and Dr Maggie Lloyd (Ret Kite Veterinary Consultancy).

The group tackled the following questions:

*Is current ethics teaching for A(SP)A personal and project license applicants fit for purpose? If not what should we be doing better? What training should we be offering (e.g. at undergraduate and CPD level) before people get as far as applying for an A(SP)A license?*

- The way applicants for personal licenses are currently taught the ethics of animal experimentation is not entirely fit for purpose. They do not necessarily need to spend all of their training time to hear very broadly about the history of ethics.
- The teaching should focus on what constitutes 'ethical behaviours'. A focus on the outcomes is advised. The learning outcome should be to train people to rationalize their decisions and being able to communicate them within an ethical framework.
- The context of ethical behaviours should also be considered and analysed, potentially through the presentation of case studies. Different ethical frameworks, cultural views, customs and practices all influence the way AWERBS and scientists operate.
- There should be integration between training in ethics and research integrity.
- Often students cover the ethics in their junior years while this training gets more valuable the closer they are to practicing ethical judgement in the context of experimental or veterinary work.
- New ethical problems related to science and technology arise all the time. The group discussed whether ethics should be revised in every new course or setting. One approach would be through CPD training.
- A level of baseline training should be given to all staff working at an institution. Some universities are already doing this and have set up research ethics and governance teams (e.g. at the [University of Exeter](#))

*Are AWERBs tackling ethics, or are they just tackling animal welfare? How can we encourage AWERBs to think about ethics?*

- The culture of care may differ in different places. Global companies operate internationally and often have common welfare standards across their different national sites. Big universities are also essentially global in as much as they employ international staff and sometimes operate at different sites across the world. How to integrate different cultural norms and needs in the process of ethical reviews is a challenging aspect for AWERBs to consider.
- AWERBs should consider broader issues of responsible research. Knowledge of the underlying principles of ethics is useful but also professional codes and best experimental practices must be taken in to consideration. The group discussed the importance of defining a set of common rules and codes of conducts.
- Project licence holders should have responsibility for ensuring and fostering a responsible and ethically sound work environment in the lab.
- Broadening the discussion, the group considered research at Places Other than a Licenced Establishment (POLEs). There is little specific training for researchers working in non-laboratory settings (such as wildlife researchers or in vet practices). The Royal Veterinary College has set up a review of what is recognized as a veterinary practice to inform decisions about what best training should be provided.

- An ethical question raised by research at POLEs is how to weight the benefit of research against the impact of human activity on the welfare of wild animals and their ecosystems.
- The conduct of research overseas presents specific challenges for AWERBS.

*Is there a gap in ethics learning provision for those undertaking research which does not require a HO license?*

- The integrated training in ethics and research integrity should apply not only to PIL and PPL holders but to anyone who works with tissues derived from animals and to all staff directly or indirectly responsible for the animals.

*Engaging with the public is an important part of gaining societal 'buy in' for the continued use of animals in research - how do delegates think we can best safely do that, and would they like some kind of training specifically on that aspect to be available? 'Beyond the concordat'.*

- People come into the practice (experimental and veterinary) from very different backgrounds. Should more be done to tackle diversity as part of the ethical debate and training? We should consider the need to unpick ethical frameworks to integrate different views, values, cultural attitudes etc.
- It is valuable for researchers and co-workers involved in animal research to display confidence in articulating the ethical implications and concerns related to their work
- The group commented that carrying out the best possible experimental work should constitute one of the requirements for using animals in research, considered in an ethical framework
- The group asked whether more open discussion should be devoted to the question of whether research involving animal should be done at all and whether certain types of research are more open to questions than others. Attendees considered the need to discuss the advisability of certain projects and the different levels where the peer and review process should happen. They also reflected on the use of animal research to develop pharmacological treatments for non-communicable diseases, the causes can sometimes reflect and are strongly influenced by human behaviour. This is linked with the ethical values and implications underlying harm-and-benefit analysis, which is at the core of the regulatory assessment.
- The group questioned how well we understand public views on the various matters and in what ways we can test their views more in depth. There are also many people who would rather not know about animal research and this leaves us with the challenge to try and engage them.
- The group also considered how to involve people more in the reality of doing experiments. It is possible to visit labs but, despite the fact that no one seems to take issue with the practice, this is still something that poses risk. We must be mindful that it can be stressful for animals to be surrounded by humans particularly if untrained visitors. Teaching labs like the University of Southampton Lifelab are good arenas to provide students direct access to and understanding of how research is carried out.
- Consideration should also be given to extremism and how to cope with extreme views.

Finally, the group considered what incentives and financial support should be devoted to training in the ethics. We should be careful to avoid additional burden on the scientists themselves,

particularly if it requires excessive public engagement, and information campaigns are better carried out by dedicated department at institutions and organisations.

High ethical standards should be embedded in processes of professional rewards and progression (e.g. the Research Excellence Framework for assessing higher education bodies, job appointments and tenure tracks) and in guidelines for the conduct of research, as in the Lancet [REWARD](#) campaign.