

## Update for AEC members from the Chair of NAEAC – October 2011

### Payment of external members

While NAEAC is aware that most AECs recompense their external members for the time and expense of attending meetings, it is aware that some AECs fail to do so. This is perhaps because they mistakenly believe that payment would compromise the independence of such members. NAEAC strongly encourages reasonable payment to those people who give up their time for the benefit of the institution concerned.

### Animals Containing Human Material (ACHM)

A report by the UK Academy of Medical Sciences looks at ethical issues involved with inserting human material into animals. While this may only occur at limited levels in New Zealand, it is as well for AECs to be aware of some of the issues involved. The report can be found at (<http://www.acmedsci.ac.uk/p47prid77.html>) and proposes categorising such procedures into three groups:

#### Category 1

The great majority of ACHM experiments, which do not present issues beyond those of the general use of animals in research, should be subject to the same oversight and regulation as other animal research.

#### Category 2

A limited number of types of ACHM research (outlined below) should be permissible, subject to additional specialist scrutiny. Although they would expect this list to evolve over time as knowledge advances, the major types of research that they would currently include in this category are:

- Substantial modification of an animal's brain that may make the brain function potentially more 'human-like', particularly in large animals.
- Experiments that may lead to the generation or propagation of functional human germ cells in animals.
- Experiments that could be expected to significantly alter the appearance or behaviour of animals, affecting those characteristics that are perceived to contribute most to distinguishing our species from our close evolutionary relatives.
- Experiments involving the addition of human genes or cells to non-human primates (NHPs) – clearly not relevant to New Zealand.

#### Category 3

A very narrow range of experiments should not, for now, be allowed because they either lack compelling scientific justification or raise very strong ethical concerns. Most of these are not relevant to New Zealand because they involve the use of NHPs. The only one that does not necessarily do so is:

- Breeding of animals that have, or may develop, human derived germ cells in their gonads, where this could lead to the production of human embryos or true hybrid embryos within an animal.



## AAALAC Position Statements

AAALAC International is a private, non-profit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through voluntary accreditation and assessment programs. AAALAC stands for the "Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care" (<http://www.aaalac.org/>). Many of you may remember the visit a couple of years ago by Dr Kathryn Bayne from AAALAC who spoke to a number of institutions about the possibility of becoming accredited.

The following is a recent AAALAC Position Statement on Social Housing (for IACUC read AEC) and is in line with point 4.7 in New Zealand's *Good Practice Guide for the use of animals in RTT*:

*The Guide states that single housing of social species should be the exception. Social housing will be considered by AAALAC International as the default method of housing unless otherwise justified based on social incompatibility resulting from inappropriate behaviour, veterinary concerns regarding animal well-being, or scientific necessity approved by the IACUC (or comparable oversight body). When necessary, single housing of social animals should be limited to the minimum period necessary and, where possible, visual, auditory, olfactory and, depending on the species, protected tactile contact with compatible conspecifics should be provided. In the absence of other animals, additional enrichment should be offered, such as safe and positive interaction with the animal care staff, as appropriate to the species of concern; periodic release into larger enclosures; supplemental enrichment items; and/or the addition of a companion animal in the room or housing area. The institution's policy and exceptions for single housing should be reviewed on a regular basis and approved by the IACUC (or comparable oversight body) and/or veterinarian.*

<http://www.aaalac.org/accreditation/positionstatements.cfm#labanimals>

## Query from an AEC

Confirmation was sought from NAEAC that non-veterinarians can perform surgical procedures in a research context. The response is that this is correct as long as the institution's veterinarian has oversight of the drugs involved.

## NAEAC's AEC Survey

While we still want some further analysis done, preliminary results include the following:

- Response:
  - 160 surveys were sent out, 148 to individuals and 12 to AEC primary contacts.
  - 106 responses were collected, 81 from individuals and 25 from AEC primary contacts.
  - At least one member from 20 of the 33 AECs responded.



- Induction packs
  - 48% had received induction packs (we hope these include the more recent members) and the majority were very positive about the content.
- NAEAC newsletters
  - While the majority (62%) of AECs distribute the newsletter to all members, some say it is not distributed at all.
  - There was some comment that the language was at times too technical – my apologies and I will try and keep it more general.
- NAEAC Workshops
  - 49% of respondents had attended at least one workshop.
  - 98% of respondents found the workshops useful or very useful.
  - Some suggested a need to have a greater focus for lay people.
- Welfare Pulse
  - Over half always or almost read Welfare Pulse and another 20% read it occasionally.
- Annual Report
  - 49% had read the 2009 Annual Report
- Advice from NAEAC
  - 58% of respondents reported that their AEC had sought advice from NAEAC
  - 79% found the information useful or very useful
- Occasional Papers
  - 40% of respondents had seen at least one Occasional Paper.
  - 42% reported they had not seen papers 5, 6 and 7 and a further 26% said didn't know if they'd seen them.
  - **This is of concern to NAEAC as these papers are currently the most relevant to AECs in terms of their core functions – approving projects, and monitoring facilities and compliance with projects.**

Some of the comments given by respondents implied a degree of dissatisfaction with some of the workings of their AEC. All AEC members should be aware of the complaints procedures which are a requirement within their institution's code of ethical conduct (CEC) (all members should have a copy of this document). If it is felt that procedures as stated in the CEC are not being followed, it is up to members to address this. NAEAC is available to provide advice as needed.

### **Animal Welfare Act Review**

NAEAC continues to work towards a submission on the review of the Animal Welfare Act 1999, and some of the information provided by AECs will assist with that. Any person (e.g. an AEC member) or group (e.g. an AEC or a code holding institution) will be able to make submissions (which are likely to be called for in the first quarter of 2012). AECs can also raise any concerns or suggestions with NAEAC.

### **Three Rs Award**

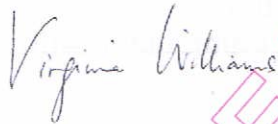
This national award is co-ordinated by NAEAC and is made annually to an individual, group or institution within New Zealand that epitomises best practice with regard to the Three Rs.



It was awarded at this year's ANZCCART conference to University of Auckland microbiologist Dr Siouxi Wiles. From the press release: "Dr Wiles work has focussed on developing bacteria that glow in the dark (bioluminescent bacteria), as a means of testing how well antibiotics and vaccines work. She says that with the rise in antibiotic resistant "superbugs" there is a real and immediate need for more effective antibiotics, and bioluminescence serves as an excellent tool for testing as only living bacteria glows – if the antibiotic is effective, the amount of light decreases as bacteria are killed. A major achievement as a result of this work has been the reduction in the number of mice necessary to trace the effectiveness of an antibiotic. Instead of having to euthanase mice at different time points, the new imaging tools measure the level of bioluminescent bacteria inside a living animal over time. This process also allows early diagnosis of non-responsive infections, allowing euthanasia at earlier – and therefore more humane – time points. Dr Wiles has also developed a test to measure the strength of bacterial bioluminescence through tissue using slices of cooked ham as a replacement for the traditionally used mice, and uses wax moth larvae as a first screen before moving on to work in mice".

This year's award was sponsored by the Royal New Zealand SPCA in line with its policy of supporting the Three Rs, and of advocating for greater effort being made by the scientific community in developing the use of non-animal and humane alternative techniques. NAEAC will again be calling for nominations for the Three Rs award next year.

Kind Regards



Virginia Williams  
NAEAC Chair