



NACWO Named Animal Care and Welfare Officer

Guidelines

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***Our Mission: Advancing
and promoting excellence
in the care and welfare
of animals in research***



GUIDANCE NOTES ON THE ROLE OF THE NAMED ANIMAL CARE AND WELFARE OFFICER (NACWO) IN ESTABLISHMENTS DESIGNATED UNDER THE ANIMALS (SCIENTIFIC PROCEDURES) ACT 1986, as amended

Introduction

The Animals Scientific Procedures Act (ASPA) as amended in 2012 has incorporated the specific requirements for personnel included in Article 20, 24 and 25 of Directive 2010/63/EU. As stated in ASPA section 2C(5) within each establishment, as well as the person responsible for compliance with Establishment Licence conditions, there needs to be one or more persons on site who will be responsible for overseeing the welfare and care of the animals in the establishment, transposed in ASPA as the Named Animal Care & Welfare Officer (NACWO).

Summary

These new NACWO guidance notes are designed to reflect the enhanced role of the NACWO and their additional responsibilities. The guidelines will help both new and established NACWOs to meet the exacting standards required of those who breed, keep or use animals for scientific purposes. Please note that these guidelines provide the minimum knowledge required and further reading is recommended.

The NACWO is appointed and nominated by the Establishment Licence Holder (ELH) to carry out functions under the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPA), as amended, for which the ELH is ultimately responsible to the Home Office. Statutory duties performed by the NACWO, on behalf of the ELH, are directed towards minimising suffering and optimising the welfare of animals being bred, kept for use or used for scientific procedures at the establishment.

The NACWO should be involved throughout the duration of the project licence including the early stages of planning. The contributions of the NACWO towards refinement, reduction and replacement (3Rs) should be sought whenever required. Improvements may include enhancements to care regimes, husbandry and housing standards.

Selection of a suitable person with the necessary qualifications and the desirable attitude to animals and colleagues is seen as key to the successful functioning of an individual in the NACWO role.

Overview of the NACWO role

The NACWO is responsible for overseeing the welfare and care of the animals, acting as a role model and promoting a culture of care at the establishment amongst both scientific and animal care staff.

The NACWO can contribute to a good culture of care in the establishment by supporting and endorsing staff training and reinforcing the importance of good animal welfare and promoting the implementation of the 3Rs.

The NACWO should have appropriate managerial authority and be regarded as the expert in their field. Their advice on the welfare of animals during the design of procedures and their implementation should be sought by both personal and project licensees.

It is vital to establish good lines of communication with all people working within the legislation, especially between the NACWO and ELH. The success of the NACWO will in turn assist the ELH in the discharge of their responsibilities and obligations, providing an important contribution to the 3Rs.

The NACWO should be an active member of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) and advise applicants for licences and licence holders on opportunities for implementing the 3Rs. Where establishments have large numbers of animals or facilities at different locations, it may be necessary to appoint more than one NACWO to ensure this role is performed effectively. The area of responsibility for each NACWO must be carefully defined and communication routes established to ensure a standard approach across the establishment.

NACWOs are often the point of contact for the Home Office Inspector and will often accompany them on their visits.

The NACWO skills and knowledge requirement

A suitable person may be a senior animal technologist with an animal technology qualification or an experienced stockperson with a qualification in agricultural science.

The Institute of Animal Technology (IAT) maintains a Register of Animal Technologists who may be appropriate to fill a NACWO post. Further details are available at www.iat.org.uk

The skills and knowledge required to fulfil this vitally important animal welfare position are both numerous and varied and include:

- An extensive knowledge of the welfare and husbandry requirements of the species housed at the establishment including the caging or housing needs, environmental enrichment opportunities, nutritional, physiological and biological requirements.

- A detailed understanding of ASPA, as amended, and able to advise other individuals working within it. This will include the Establishment Licence Holder (ELH), Named Veterinary Surgeon (NVS), personal and project licence holders, animal technologists and others working within the establishment.
- Be familiar with the provisions of project licences, particularly the adverse effects expected for each protocol, the control measures and humane end-points specified and the methods of killing specified in licences.
- Appropriate personal authority to promote high standards and good verbal, written communication and diplomacy skills to champion a culture of care amongst both scientific and husbandry staff.
- Appropriate managerial authority to enable them to ensure that high standards of husbandry and care are practised, meeting or exceeding the minimum standards set out in the Code of Practice. This responsibility extends into all areas named on the establishment licence.
- The ability and knowledge to recognise any variance from normal animal health and behaviour, determine the action that must be taken together with the degree of urgency and be conversant with all approved methods of euthanasia in use at that establishment.

Responsibilities of the NACWO

NACWOs are responsible for overseeing the day-to-day husbandry, care and welfare of the protected animals held at their establishment. The NACWO role is key to establishment licence holders properly discharging their obligations and responsibilities.

NACWOs are a source of expert advice on the welfare of the protected animals. Everyone within the establishment must be aware the NACWO is acting on the establishment licence holder's delegated responsibility.

It is a pivotal position and must promote an appropriate caring attitude amongst all those in the establishment who come into contact with animals.

It is vital that the NACWO is not only appropriately trained and qualified e.g. to IAT Level 3 but that they constantly update this knowledge and skill base to remain at the forefront of new and emerging technologies. In short, the NACWO must be respected as a valued expert on animal husbandry, care, welfare and legislation.

The NACWO must have access to the project licences within their area of responsibility.

The NACWO must be able to advise and assist both personal and project licensees regarding the conduct of procedures, helping them to maintain compliance. Their knowledge should also extend to regulations controlling the transportation, import and export of animals from and to establishments where these activities are undertaken.

The NACWO should establish an overarching system for continuous care of the animals, ensuring the animals are checked daily and that an effective information/decision chain is in place and known to all relevant staff. This will ensure that any welfare concerns are recognised and dealt with promptly and appropriately.

If the health or welfare of an animal is giving cause for concern, the NACWO must inform the personal licence holder who is responsible for the welfare of that animal. If that person is unavailable, NACWOs must ensure that the animal is cared for and, if necessary, that it is humanely killed using a Schedule 1 or other method approved in the establishment licence. If necessary, the NVS or the assigned Home Office Inspector should be contacted.

The NACWO should:

be familiar with the main provisions of ASPA; have up-to-date knowledge and experience of relevant animal technology and a thorough knowledge of the husbandry and welfare needs of the species kept in the establishment; be aware of the standards of care, accommodation, husbandry and welfare set out in the Code of Practice; take appropriate steps to develop and maintain high standards of care and husbandry appropriate to the species;

- NACWOs are required to complete training accredited by the IAT, normally before taking up the position. They must be prepared to initiate and progress improvements to the care and welfare of animals. They should promote implementation of refinements in animal husbandry, breeding and use. The NACWO must keep abreast of developments and advances in the field of laboratory animal science, technology and welfare, particularly the 3Rs. Continued professional development (CPD) is crucial to the role. Where there are changes to the species, models or types of work, the NACWO should undertake relevant additional training. Membership of professional laboratory science organisations, such as the Institute of Animal Technology (IAT) and attainment of Registered Animal Technologist (RAnTech) status is strongly recommended.
- The ELH must ensure that sufficient competent staff are available at all times to care for the animals.

know about relevant methods of humane killing listed in Schedule 1 to the Act, (together with any other approved methods listed in the establishment licence) and either be competent in their use or be able to contact others, named on a register maintained at the establishment;

- The ELH must ensure that a register is maintained of those who are competent to humanely kill protected animals. The NACWO must be familiar with standard methods of humane killing as they may be called to use them in an emergency.

be able to recognise the signs of pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm in the species for which they care and ensure that there is available expertise to monitor all animals to recognise any variation from normal health and behaviour;

- NACWOs must have good knowledge of the animals under their care and be able to recognise indicators of poor welfare, pain and other forms of suffering and the ways of alleviating them.

know which areas of their establishment are listed in the ‘Schedule of Premises’ on the establishment licence;

- Establishment licences contain a ‘Schedule of Premises’ listing the specific areas within the establishment where protected animals may be bred, held, used in regulated procedures and/or killed. The NACWO should have a clear understanding of the specifics of the schedule of premises and be aware of the designated use for each area.
- A project licence may be authorised to carry out procedures at a place other than a licensed establishment known as a POLE. Although the role and responsibilities of the NACWO does not extend to POLEs, a project licensee would be expected to take advice from the NACWO when planning such work.
- In order to discharge fully their responsibilities, the NACWO must have unlimited access to all areas listed as within their responsibility on the establishment licence.

establish a system to ensure that a competent person sees and checks every animal kept in an approved holding area at least once daily;

- NACWOs are required to establish a system to ensure that a competent person sees and checks every animal kept in an approved holding area, including designated rooms outside the facility, at least once daily. Checks may be carried out by the responsible licensee, a competent person deputised by them, a trained animal technologist or the NACWO. The time, date and name of the person who has performed the inspection should be recorded.

know how to contact, at any time, the appropriate person(s); be familiar with the main provisions of project licences, particularly the adverse effects expected for each protocol, the control measures and humane end-points specified and the methods of killing specified in licences;

- NACWOs must know how to contact, at any time, the NVS or their deputy, the ELH or their nominee and project and personal licence holders.
- The NACWO must have access to the project licences operating within their area of responsibility. A good working knowledge of each licence is required and in particular the 3Rs and the protocol sheets including the possible adverse effects and the humane endpoints specified.
- It is the role of the NACWO to assist personal and project licensees to ensure that unnecessary pain, suffering, distress or lasting harm is prevented or alleviated.
- The NACWO must be aware of any special care required by animals which are subject to regulated procedures.

pro-actively, working with the NVS (as appropriate) promote implementation of refinements in animal care, husbandry and use;

- The NACWO should work closely with the NVS to ensure that good practice is employed at all times with respect to animal care and husbandry.

help the establishment licence holder to keep suitable records of the health of the animals (under the supervision of the NVS), of the environmental conditions in the approved areas in which animals are held and of the source and disposal of animals.

- NACWOs must have a good appreciation and knowledge of record keeping systems.
- Comprehensive health records should indicate whether there has been a deterioration in the condition of any animal. These records should include details of the observation made together with the action(s) taken and may be kept as a paper record in, for instance, a day book or within a computer system.
- Environmental records including ambient room temperatures and humidity should be kept as paper copy or within a computer system. It is the responsibility of the NACWO to ensure environmental conditions are maintained as laid down in the HO Code of Practice. Any deviations must be recorded, with possible causes and the action taken to correct the problem and return conditions to acceptable levels.
- Comprehensive records, on behalf of the ELH, of the source and fate of animals must be kept either as hard copy or within a computer system. All records must be available to the HO Inspector on request.

champion a culture of care at your establishment acting as a role model for all those who care for, and use, animals;

- The NACWO should be instrumental in establishing a 'culture of care' ensuring animals are treated with compassion and respect. An appropriate culture of care can only improve animal welfare. Training, CPD and good communication will help develop this culture of care.

be an active member of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) at their establishment and advise applicants for licences and licence holders on practical opportunities for implementing the 3Rs;

- The AWERB provides a forum for discussion and development of ethical advice to the ELH on all matters related to animal welfare, care and use at their establishment which may impact on the lifetime experience of the animals. At least one NACWO must be a full member of the AWERB.
- NACWOs have the opportunity to contribute to the draft PPL ensuring that the 3Rs have been afforded full and proper consideration. The NACWO is expected to monitor the progress of the project licence and to make suggestions to the project licence holder to improve the welfare of animals.

Competencies/qualities of the NACWO

NACWOs should have a good understanding of the local structure for management and responsibilities relating to animal use at the establishment, including how key roles and related tasks are fulfilled. The amount of time and effort necessary for this role may vary, dependent on the size and complexity of the animal facility but the responsibilities of the NACWO remain constant.

In addition to a comprehensive knowledge of the legislation and the husbandry requirements of all species within the facility, the following competencies are suggested as being key to the role of the NACWO;

- **Concern for standards** - only the highest standard is acceptable in every aspect of work with laboratory animals, whether it is methods, equipment, systems, procedures or outcomes. They will act as a role model and should champion a culture of care at the establishment amongst both scientific and animal care staff.
- **CPD** – To maintain and continue to develop their professional knowledge and skills. A NACWO who is a Registered Animal Technologist (RAnTech) will be obliged to undertake and record CPD.
- **Initiative** - a proactive approach, seizing opportunities, as and when they occur. The NACWO will be expected to make suggestions for improvement in all aspects of laboratory animal science and welfare and seek and apply new ideas.

Conflicts of interest

Where a NACWO is also a project licence holder or a personal licence holder, another person should be nominated to fulfil the role of NACWO for providing advice on the welfare of animals being used under that project or personal licence. Alternatively, the arrangement may be overseen by the AWERB to ensure there is no conflict of interest.

Absence of the NACWO

It is a condition on the establishment licence and a responsibility of the establishment licence holder to ensure that in the event of the absence of the NACWO suitable arrangements are made to ensure the animals are given adequate care [**standard condition 16**].

Training for the NACWO

NACWOs are required to complete training accredited by the Institute of Animal Technology, normally before taking up the position. If this is not possible, then justification for the delay and the expected date of attendance at the course should be included within the application. The inspector will consider each case individually.

The training of the NACWO should give sufficient understanding of the biology and husbandry of the relevant species as well as an understanding of the regulations governing the use of animals in research and their welfare.

The NACWO should have a good appreciation and knowledge of:

- ASPA, as amended, the associated Guidance and Codes of Practice
- standard conditions on licences and the NACWOs role in promoting compliance
- ethical issues relating to the use of animals
- relevant husbandry and care practices, including methods of euthanasia, ensuring compliance with CoP requirements
- the 3Rs relevant to the work at the establishment
- recognition of indicators of poor welfare, pain and other forms of suffering and knowledge of ways of alleviating them
- record keeping systems

The NACWO must keep up to date with technical advances within animal science and changes in legislation. The Institute of Animal Technology offers a CPD programme providing opportunities to exchange ideas with peers and to acquire new knowledge.

Suggested further reading

Home Office Guidance of the Operation of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (March 2014)

Code of Practice for the Housing and Care of Animals Bred, Supplied or Used for Scientific Purposes (December 2014)

Directive 2010/63/EU On Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes (September 2010)

IAT Registered Office:

5 South Parade

Summertown

Oxford

OX2 7JL

E admin@iat.org.uk

T 0800 085 4380



Institute of
Animal Technology

