

**Notes from the Workshop for Category C  
Members of  
Animal Ethics Committees**

**Held at the University of Melbourne  
on Friday, 23 April, 1999**

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## Session One - Introduction

The Director of ANZCCART, Dr Robert Baker, welcomed the 45 delegates and explained that the workshop was being held to discuss concerns expressed nationally about the role and effectiveness of Category C members of animal ethics committees in Australia. These concerns have been voiced by Animals Australia and by RSPCA and it was appropriate that both organisations were represented at this workshop. *The Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* (1997) in section 2.2.2 defines the membership of an animal ethics committee (AEC). A Category C member is defined as:

*a person with demonstrable commitment to and established experience in, furthering the welfare of animals, who is not employed by or otherwise associated with the institution, and who is not involved in the care and use of animals for scientific purposes. The persons should where possible be selected on the basis of active membership of, and nomination by, an animal welfare organisation.*

In a subscript to this definition, the Code further states that:

*It is preferable that the Category C person be a nominee, but not a representative, of an animal welfare organisation as this will ensure both that the animal welfare credentials of the person are genuine and that the person will receive some measure of support from their nominating organisation. It is for these reasons that the Code suggests that the Category C person be chosen on the basis of active membership of an animal welfare organisation and has a "track record" in paid or voluntary work for the welfare of animals. Most animal welfare groups, e.g. RSPCA, ANZFAS, Animal Welfare league and the Animal Societies Federation, maintain lists of responsible members willing to devote time to AECs.*

*The purpose of including an animal welfare person on each AEC is twofold:*

- (i) *This member should bring an animal welfare perspective to AEC deliberations. While all members of AECs must consider the welfare of the animals, the Category C member brings to the committee a special awareness of current community animal welfare concerns, and these will be his/her primary focus during AEC deliberations.*
- (ii) *Inclusion of hundreds of animal welfarists Australia-wide should ensure that the animal welfare movement becomes knowledgeable of the work being performed in research and teaching institutions, and that scientists and teachers become more aware of genuine concerns over animal welfare.*

*Veterinarians are only appropriate as Category C members when they have specific welfare experience, for example, veterinarians working in animal shelters and pounds.*

While this workshop was being held to focus on the needs of Category C members, Dr Baker noted that about half of those present were associated with AECs in other ways, either as members in different categories (including Chairperson) or administratively through State Government, research institutions or animal welfare organisations.

One of ANZCCART's major roles is to support the implementation of the Code of Practice by providing assistance to AECs. Dr Baker referred to ANZCCART's publications, particularly the quarterly newsletter *ANZCCART News*, which regularly features articles about AECs and their operation. The latest issue (March, 1999) has as its leading article a paper about effective functioning of committees and the resolution of conflict arising within them. The role of the Chairman is obviously critical to the successful operation of any committee, one of the most important functions being the recognition and effective resolution of conflict.

Category C and D members have a different role from the other members of an AEC, as they are present as representatives of the wider community and therefore provide, among other functions, a degree of public accountability to the functioning of the AEC.

Dr Baker then asked for views and personal experiences of the participants about Category C members and how well (or not well) they are working. The main outcome from this workshop is identification of these problems and if possible, development of mechanisms by which the Victorian Bureau of Animal Welfare and other State/Territory bodies, as well as ANZCCART and AECs themselves, can deal with these.

Concerns highlighted in this discussion were:

- the importance of non-technical language being used in experimental protocols;
- frustration:
  - with time needed for consideration of papers for AEC meetings and the amount of information required to be read;
  - with time taken to implement improvements in conditions in which experimental animals are kept;
  - with apparent excess responsibility in some AECs resting with Category C and D members compared with other members.
- the danger of an AEC becoming a "rubber-stamp", or simply an audit committee;
- that there should be an annual review of each AEC by its host institution (as is required by Section 2.2.33 of the Code of Practice);
- with inadequate administrative assistance to ensure paperwork is circulated well before the date of the AEC meeting and to ensure reviews as described above are conducted regularly;
- with the need for the AEC to meet investigators, so that they can explain their projects and answer questions from Committee;
- with how to "educate" Category B members (practising scientists) to work as part of the AEC team;
- with the role of the chairperson and what attributes should he/she possess? Should the chairperson be a practising scientist or a lay person?

## Session Two - Different Perspectives

### Bureau of Animal Welfare, Victoria - Dr Andrew Cameron

Dr Cameron, Senior Veterinary Officer (Scientific Procedures) with the Bureau, began with a brief review of the legislative basis for animal experimentation in Victoria. Establishments wishing to use animals for scientific purposes must be licensed under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (1986), which requires that each licensed establishment must have an animal ethics committee (AEC), which among others, must include **a representative of the public with appropriate experience in animal welfare** (Category C). There is a Victorian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes which has legal standing in the Act and which has adopted the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes.

The community, through the Act and the Code of Practice, has made it clear that their views, as well as those of scientists, need to be considered.

He referred to the frustration which can be experienced by members of AECs and remarked that this was not surprising, given the complexity and difficulty of the task required of AECs. How does an AEC weight the potential scientific value of an experiment against the potential adverse welfare of the experimental animals? This is very difficult and involves comparing the possible future benefits of the work with present costs in pain and distress of the animals. Quite often the benefits accrue to man and not directly to the species under concern.

As there is no equation which can be used in this situation, it requires thoughtful judgement of AEC members, drawing on their individual values and experience, who need to strike the right balance between the needs of science and a moral obligation to treat animals humanely. This can be expressed simplistically as an ethical costs versus benefits analysis. Some guiding principles can include that procedures involving significant noxiousness to animals can never be justified for trivial outcomes and that some procedures may involve such a degree of noxiousness that they should never be used. To maximise the benefits from the science and to minimise the costs to the animals is the objective and is achieved if the principles of the Three Rs of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement are utilised.

The scientific side of the equation is probably best judged by scientists, who are best able to judge whether a trial is designed to answer its hypothesis and whether the research has validity in terms of its adding to the knowledge base of science. However, scientists alone cannot make the overall judgements, which require the balance of views from the non-scientific members of the AEC - the Category C and D members.

He referred to the importance of confidentiality in AEC discussions. Institutions should have terms of reference for their AEC, which should include confidentiality. This must enable members to seek advice without breaching confidentiality. The AEC should also have a grievance procedure for AEC members and for investigators.

### **Desirable attributes of Category C members**

The Code of Practice clearly defines the type of person appropriate for this Category of membership.

Desirable attributes include:

- awareness of current animal welfare concerns in the general community;
- knowledge of the Three Rs;
- understanding of the institutional AEC policies and of its terms of reference;
- time and commitment; and
- good communication skills.

Undesirable attributes include:

- complacency;
- arrogance;
- immoderate views;
- inconsistency; and
- inactivity.

### **Operating procedures**

He then moved on to discuss operating procedures of AECs, of which perhaps the most important is the need for a quorum. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, he or she should have a proxy who can attend in their place.

An AEC may appoint an Executive, whose functions should be clearly defined by the AEC. An AEC Executive may only approve minor modifications to protocols or deal with emergencies. It should not approve proposals.

Proposals to be considered must only be approved at meetings of the full committee. This may include video-conferencing but perhaps not tele-conferencing, as this does not provide an active interface between members.

Where possible, decisions on protocols should be made on the basis of consensus. The Code of Practice states that where two or more members disagree with a particular proposal, the AEC must explore alternatives before the proposal may be passed.

### **Responsibilities of institutions to their AECs**

These can be defined as the Four Rs.

- An institution must provide its AECs with resources, facilities and powers;
- it must refer matters to the AEC;
- it must respond to matters raised by the AEC; and
- it must review its AEC annually.

In addition it must, on the advice of the AEC, discipline staff and must have procedures in place to resolve conflict. Irreconcilable differences can be referred to the Bureau of Animal Welfare, or discussed with the Chief Executive of the Institution.

## **Questions**

Dr Cameron was asked whether the Bureau checks whether licensed institutions in Victoria do have procedures in place for review of approved protocols, e.g. annually. He agreed that this was necessary and looked for this when inspecting scientific establishments.

He was asked whether the Bureau actually scrutinised the composition of all AECs in Victoria and replied that it does. This includes the need for a balance - i.e. Category C and D members have to comprise at least one third of the AEC membership.

### **NHMRC Animal Welfare Committee - Dr Alana Mitchell**

The Animal Welfare Committee (AWC) of the NHMRC has a membership similar to that of an AEC, with eight representatives from categories A to D. She attends in her capacity as the Animal Welfare Liaison Officer of the AWC, a position which commenced last year. She is the first contact for persons with concerns relating to the AWC and liaises with the general community, ANZCCART, lobby groups, government agencies and other organisations.

The terms of reference of the AWC are to advise the Research Committee of the NHMRC on all matters related to conduct of, and ethics in, animal experimentation, and, with the approval of the NHMRC, to develop and implement ways of ensuring that animal experimentation funded by the NHMRC takes place according to the Code of Practice.

The AWC takes the view that the welfare of humans should be given preference over that of other species, which is a view probably not shared by some people at this workshop.

The NHMRC view is that, given that the use of animals in research in Australia is accepted, it is subject to conditions, particularly that they may only be used to obtain significant information. This is not easy to assess, either for scientists or for people without scientific training. There are also the issues of the welfare of the animals, the numbers used and the need for respect of the animals at all times. These are all issues to be addressed by AECs.

The AWC is very supportive of all members of AECs and is aware of the special viewpoints and philosophies brought to AECs by Category C members.

The AWC was very concerned when it received Animals Australia's list of requests to the scientific community re AECs and was quick to respond, as it shared these concerns. The main areas in which the NHMRC can be of assistance are in providing education to all members of AECs (not only C and D members) and in identifying a system whereby it is possible to independently audit AECs.

The AWC has visited four institutions so far this year to audit AECs and has found problems in self-regulation by AECs. This needs to be addressed by all groups with an interest in working together.

Dr Mitchell referred to the type of personality required by Category C members. This includes the confidence to stand up and speak out and stand up for your views. A "wilting violet" will not be effective in achieving this.

While the lay description of the project is important, there will always be some scientists who find it difficult to explain their work. This is where there may be a role for a scientist with a particular interest in communication or journalism to assist scientists in writing lay statements, in a similar way to their seeking advice on experimental design from a statistician. It is sometimes

confronting for a scientist to be told how to write about their work (e.g., in an AEC protocol), yet this needs to be done without alienating the scientist. It is easy to become preoccupied with issues such as this and to lose sight of the fact that animal welfare is the main concern of AECs.

## Questions

Dr Baker reiterated the crucial importance to the effective functioning of any committee of the personalities of those involved and the need for members to be able to express their views assertively.

Dr Mitchell was asked about the various policies and guidelines published from time to time by the AWC of NHMRC. While these are not incorporated in the Code, they have tended to become a *de facto* part of it.

An example is the recent draft guidelines on the *in vitro* production of monoclonal antibodies, which has been circulated widely by the NHMRC for comment. This, when adopted, should stop the use of the ascitic method of producing these antibodies in mice in NHMRC funded research. The policy will not apply to NHMRC funded projects currently in progress, but to new projects from next year. It is a very positive step and was initiated at a workshop held in Melbourne last year by ANZCCART on this topic.

Dr Mitchell added that there are likely to be a number of laboratories established around Australia which will be dedicated to producing monoclonal antibodies by the *in vitro* technique. Whether the likely increased costs to the researcher will be absorbed by a corresponding increase in NHMRC grants is not yet known.

## Animals Australia - Ms Glenys Oogjes

Animals Australia is a national federation of about 40 animal welfare groups, which over the years has often been asked to nominate people to AECs as Category C members. Once such people join an AEC, they are there as individuals, rather than as nominees of Animals Australia, although of course they do provide feedback over time about how various AECs are working.

Recently there has been quite a degree of disquiet about the effectiveness of some AECs, in terms of whether or not the Code of Practice is being adhered to and whether the AECs are having any real effect both on reducing the numbers of

animals used and in refining the procedures and, in the end, on improving animal welfare. Last year Animals Australia conducted a survey of those of its members who were known to be serving as Category C members of AECs around Australia. There were responses from 30 people. One of the questions was *How are decisions made on your AEC?* Most were made by consensus, as recommended by the Code, but some were by a majority vote or by unanimous agreement. The next question was whether the respondents were happy with the way these decisions were made. While about two-thirds said that they were, others were not.

Another question was whether they thought researchers were answering the questions on the AEC protocol form adequately, particularly about the crucial issues such as justification and existence of alternatives. Almost half the respondents were not happy about the information provided by researchers.

Another question asked was the role played by other AEC members on their committees, including the Chairperson. This included whether or not the Chairperson acted in an independent, effective manner. Only about a third answered yes to this, while others felt the Chairperson either was not effective in this role or was representing the researchers' interests.

Category C members were also asked to comment on Category D members in their AECs and how they performed. In the Category C members' view, some were good, about one third of them were ineffective, while others were described as hopeless.

To the question *Do you believe AECs adhere strictly to the Code?* (e.g., regarding investigating alternatives to animals before approving a protocol), almost half said no, which is of real concern.

Aggression or animosity from researchers when a Category C member has raised objections to a protocol had been experienced by almost half the respondents. How to interpret this is difficult, as a person's reaction will vary according to their own personality.

There were also comments on a range of other issues, including taking issue with the assumption by AECs that animal use in research will continue.

The reason for the survey was to get a better idea of what Category C members were feeling and the results were discussed at the 1998 AGM of Animals Australia in Perth. As a result, a motion was carried that ....we, the combined groups represented by Animals Australia, are aware that large numbers of AECs currently fail in their duty to properly replace animals in research, reduce numbers used and refine research methods. Animals Australia hereby puts the research Community on notice that, unless prompt redress of this situation occurs, it will recommend to its member societies and supporters that they withdraw their services as Category C members on AECs.

Animals Australia therefore seriously questioned the value of the AEC itself and noted that, particularly in the small States and in the Territories, there is little effective assessment of AEC performance.

While the Code of Practice has been, or is about to be, adopted in all States and Territories, legislation varies, as does the extent of monitoring and inspection by the relevant government departments.

Animals Australia has put forward a number of ways it believes this situation can be addressed. This includes the creation of an independent AEC audit system to report to each State and Territory Animal Welfare Office within a year. So far, there has been a very positive and constructive reaction to these concerns from the AWC of the NHMRC, from ANZCCART, from

several large institutions which have a lot of AECs and from some State government offices (such as in Victoria), with which worthwhile discussions have been held.

The second suggestion put forward was the establishment of a professional inspectorate to oversee animal use in research and to report to government. While there is already an inspectorate in Victoria (primarily one person) and in NSW, this is not the case in the other States and Territories.

The final suggestion related to the need for training of AEC members - at the time of joining and every two years thereafter.

The essence of the Animals Australia concern is whether or not AECs are operating properly. While the Code of Practice is fairly clear about what is required, the problem is how to interpret it and put it into effect. Section 1.2 of the Code says that tests using animals may be performed **only** after a decision has been made that they are justified, weighing the scientific and educational value against the potential effect on the welfare of the animals. That is the difficulty and that is where a strong AEC (not just a strong Category C member) can ensure that researchers have looked at these issues and provided the required information. It is not reasonable to expect the Category C member to make his or her own enquiries on these matters - it is the responsibility of the researchers and of the whole AEC.

## Questions

In response to a query re the availability of written training information for AEC members, Ms Oogjes referred to material published by:

- Animals Australia;
- ANZCCART (see Session Three); and
- Victorian Animal Welfare Advisory Committee.

There is no shortage of written material. Meetings such as this, however, are important and attendance at them by AEC members is very valuable.

While there are well-developed policies and guidelines for AECs to consider, putting them into practice is the key.

Another question referred to the difficulty experienced by Category C members in finding information, e.g. about the availability of alternatives. Ms Oogjes agreed, but believed this should be the researchers' responsibility. This can include an explanation to the AEC of how they went about it.

## RSPCA (Australia) - Dr Hugh Wirth, National President

The RSPCA attitude to animal experimentation is described in its policy which was adopted in 1980 when its National Council was formed. It clearly states that the RSPCA is opposed to the use of live animals in animal experimentation. However, RSPCA acknowledges that this is not possible in all areas with our current knowledge and so RSPCA accepts experimentation using live animals in certain cases. The policy goes on to define how those cases would be approved. RSPCA supports the system whereby the State and Territory laws provide a legal basis to animal experimentation and that the core of that system is the AEC.

Good animal welfare results from the community having confidence in the systems which it has established to ensure animals are used and treated humanely. There are three arms of the community, or the partnership that the community looks to, to give it confidence about animal experimentation. The first is the role of the government, the second is the role of the scientist and the third is the role of the community. The last two are usually represented by groups specifically formed to represent the majority. There are associations of research scientists which look after the interests of the scientific community and there are a number of animal welfare groups which look after the interests of the community. If any one of these three partnership groups fail, then the community becomes restive. If some remedy is applied quickly, confidence is restored. If confidence is lost, it can lead to further problems and a destruction of confidence. This appears to be happening with the AEC system in NSW, and RSPCA (NSW) has publicly expressed its concerns.

The RSPCA (Australia) view is that the current law and the current system by which animal experimentation is controlled in Australia is the last chance for the current partnership system we have here. This does not exist in the USA, UK and northern Europe.

It is worth analysing why the RSPCA is troubled by the animal experimentation system. RSPCA draws on a wide group within the community and feedback suggests that people are not happy with the functioning of AECs rather than about the actual decisions of an AEC to approve animal experimentation. These criticisms come down to three particular areas. This often relates to the Chairperson and his or her attitude. Every AEC involved has a different style of approach by the Chairperson. Training can only do so much. It can bring out latent ability, but you can't necessarily train people to have a particular attitude. The RSPCA does some internal monitoring of AECs to see how well the law is being applied.

As the Code of Practice is well-written, with good footnotes, AEC Chairmen need to have an attitude which equates to how the system will work. This does not reflect on the AEC Chairpersons, as this is just an example of how different people interpret legislation and the Code of Practice differently.

The role of the scientist on the AEC is again related to attitude. A scientist has to leave the privileges of his or her occupation with the responsibilities which accompany it. These include their obligations to the community.

The role of the community member is equally a matter of attitude. While the majority of the public accepts the use of animals for scientific purposes, and the law recognises this, a person who joins an AEC and does not accept this, is helping to defeat what the community has said. The Category C and D members are there to see that the community's wish as granted to the research community via parliament is done properly. People who take on these community roles should be suited to it and have the capacity to do it. In this regard, the RSPCA is regularly asked to supply names of people suitable to be appointed as Category C members. If does not have the people with the capacity, it says so. No amount of training will put square pegs into round holes.

Dr Wirth then discussed the issue in NSW, where the RSPCA (NSW) has withdrawn all of its appointments to Category C positions on AECs. Why has this happened? It was because of a failure of attitude and it is clear that the government has failed to recognise the partnership between itself, researchers and community representatives. There has also been a failure of researchers to understand that the community has animal welfare attitudes that are not necessarily scientifically correct, scientifically provable or even logical. He used the case of the use of pound dogs for research and teaching in NSW as an example.

### **Questions**

Dr Wirth was asked whether RSPCA (Australia) should deal with the problems outlined in NSW nationally to try to restore the partnership described above. He replied that the State/Territory system of government in Australia made this very difficult. There were eight separate RSPCAs in Australia, each of which reflected the attitudes and aspirations of the community from which they had sprung. RSPCA (Australia) was formed in 1980 and has achieved a lot since then in terms of common policies. It speaks with one voice on these policies, but how they are applied and in what priority varies between States. He did not personally agree with the approach to problem solving in AECs in NSW and WA, preferring to sit down and talk through issues, even if this was difficult. It is very important that the three arms - government, researchers and the community, keep talking and working together. This becomes very difficult when one or more parties becomes entrenched.

With regard to payment, RSPCA does not ask for payment for its members on AECs. Some may receive an honorarium to cover their travelling expenses.

He was asked how to encourage RSPCA (NSW) to change its view on providing Category C members and believed that this was a matter of attitude. This problem hasn't happened in Victoria because there has always been very good liaison between RSPCA and government.

He was then asked to comment on whether veterinary surgeons should be allowed to sit as Category C members on AECs, and replied that not all veterinarians are knowledgeable in this area, just as he is not knowledgeable about research. The spirit of the Code of Practice in considering this is that a veterinarian should only be suitable as a Category C member if he or she has an active involvement with an animal welfare organisation. The next speaker, Dr Carole Webb, is such a person.

## Cat Protection Society of Victoria - Dr Carole Webb

Dr Webb is a member of the AWC of NHMRC, a veterinarian and has been a Category C AEC member for over seven years. She discussed some of the problems she has encountered in fulfilling this role and how she has resolved them.

The Cat Protection Society is an animal welfare organisation which opposes animal experimentation very strongly and shares the concerns of Animals Australia and RSPCA (NSW) on the current function of AECs.

She detailed her experience as a Category C member from when she first joined an AEC. While she found the terminology very difficult to understand, the most difficult aspect was the lack of training and support. This should have been provided by the Chairperson, who should at least have given her with a copy of the Code of Practice.

Sources of advice for Category C members are:

- RSPCA;
- Animals Australia;
- ANZCCART;
- AWC of NHMRC;
- animal house staff; and
- the Category A member.

Valuable information can be gained from all of these. She emphasised the importance of talking to animal house staff in particular, as well as to the Category A member on the AEC.

A problem she has encountered is where does the money come from to fund basic improvements such as facilities and caging equipment - *who holds the purse strings?* Funding should be allocated to maintaining and improving the research facilities on an ongoing basis so that crises can be avoided. This should be a regular agenda item. Lack of funding should not become an excuse to house and care for animals in less than adequate conditions. It is therefore important for a Category C member to understand how the institution is structured.

The third problem which she has experienced is conflict resolution. From her AEC experience, conflict occurs on two levels. From the structure of the AEC there are inherent philosophical differences among its members and at some point in time, this is likely to lead to conflict. This is particularly likely to occur between Category C and Category B members. While resolution of the philosophical differences is unlikely, acknowledgment of their existence is crucial for the successful operation of the AEC. Therefore, before the conflict arises, it is essential that procedures and guidelines are put in place for handling the conflict and for resolving it. If you have a problem and you are not being heard, what do you do? This is the role of the Chairperson. If there is not a conflict resolution procedure in place, it is worth putting on the agenda, so that it is developed **before** the conflict arises.

There is a second level of conflict, she related, which is within herself. As an animal welfarist, she is opposed to experimentation on animals, yet she sits on an AEC which approves experiments. Why does she do this and how does she cope? There are many parallels in the nature of this conflict and it is sometimes shared by the animal house staff, which provides another reason for establishing good communication as a support mechanism.

The first step is to understand why you actually feel uncomfortable. This is a problem for all animal care workers, *who must love and respect animals and hold them in the highest regards* (which Category C members do) and yet *they must euthanase healthy animals and provide those animals with*

*the most secure and friendly atmosphere possible while so doing.* This is what Category C members do as they approve an application. *They must rationalise euthanasia as being the best thing for the animals and being part of the overall solution ..... so they must believe they are contributing to a process of change and that is their rationalisation for being there.* Then they must deal with the researchers (the Category B members).

To change a system you must be involved in it for a long term. Dr Webb believed that the role of the Category C member is to change the status quo and to bring the standard, the norm, closer to their perceived goal. While this is a long term aim, Category C members can have considerable impact in the short term, by improving the conditions in which animals are housed. The numbers of animals used need to be justified and reduced and replacements need to be sought. A Category C member can expedite all of these, but in so doing, is likely to experience conflict.

In order to continue to participate in AECs, Category C members must believe they are making a difference, however slow this may be. This is part of the frustration and the reason for this workshop today. The rate of change is too slow and acceleration of change must be initiated. The problems being experienced are similar throughout the country.

#### **Editor's Note**

For a discussion of conflict resolution on committees, with particular reference to AECs, see:

Hassall, G. (1999) *Committees and conflict resolution.* ANZCCART News 12: (1) 1-3.

## **Session Three - How to Maximise the Category C Member's Effectiveness**

### **University of Melbourne - Dr Lyndal Scott**

#### **Audiovisual Aids - the new CD ROM from the University of Melbourne**

Dr Scott is the Animal Welfare Officer at the University of Melbourne, a position she has held for 12 years. Prior to that she taught animal technicians at a TAFE College. One of the real training needs she has recognised over this period is the training of investigators undertaking research using animals.

This led to the development and production of a CD-ROM titled *Careful How You Hold Me*. This exciting new multi media CD-ROM training program has been developed for investigators, honours and postgraduate students, animal technicians, teachers, and others new to the field of laboratory animal science and animal welfare. A resource for collective use or self-paced learning it will also be of value to veterinarians and members of AECs. Emphasis is on animal welfare, standards of practice recommended, and core information required to operate effectively as an animal-based scientist.

There are five sections:

- regulations;
- husbandry (mouse, rat, guinea pig and rabbit);
- anaesthesia;
- aseptic technique and surgical practice, and
- euthanasia/autopsy, disposal.

Content includes over 100 high quality still photographs, 40 minutes of Quicktime movies, problem solving examples, and testing (including an off computer skills test in the section on husbandry), hot links to background information and much more. Material has been drawn from a wide range of sources, including experience of practitioners working in the field over many years.

Provided with a clear interface menu and easy-to-follow navigation tools the program has been designed for targeted or sequential use of menu sections/topics listed.

Hardware Computer Requirements:

#### **IBM Compatible Requirements**

- Pentium 75MHz or higher CPU (Pentium 133 MHz recommended)
- 16MB of RAM (32MB recommended) with CD-Rom drive and SVGA monitor.

#### **MacIntosh Requirements**

- Any PowerPC based Macintosh
- 16MB of RAM (32MB Recommended) with CD ROM drive

The training emphasises agreed standards for animal care, which is of particular interest to Category C members on AECs. The program has been tested on about 20 people, comprising animal technicians, graduate students, veterinarians wishing to work with laboratory animals and members of AECs. Their assessment has been uniformly good.

The recommended retail price is \$AUS 150.00 (Australia and NZ), including packaging and postage. Overseas orders are \$US 150.00, including packaging and postage. Special prices for class sets over ten CDs are available. For orders please contact Ms R. O'Shea, Multimedia Education Unit, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, Australia 3052.

For an order form or further information and news updates visit the website address:  
[www.meu.unimelb.edu.au/careful](http://www.meu.unimelb.edu.au/careful)

# The ANZCCART AEC Guidelines - Dr Robert Baker

ANZCCART has produced this information package for members of AECs. It is particularly important for new Category C (animal welfare) and D (lay) members of AECs to be provided with background information about the functioning of the AEC, as well as what is expected of them. Joining a committee comprising scientific and technical experts can be very daunting. However, Category C and D members are particularly important to the successful functioning of AECs, as they are there to represent the wider community and to provide public accountability for the AEC and its decisions.

These guidelines have been compiled to help members of an AEC to understand the way in which the committee functions, and to ensure that their participation is worthwhile. They are intended to assist in promoting understanding of the issues affecting AECs and how to address these, to facilitate their effective operation in compliance with the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. The AEC must ensure that all animal-based research and teaching within an institution is carried out in accordance with the relevant laws and institutional guidelines, and that it takes account of legitimate public concerns.

Information about the ways in which animals are used for scientific purposes is not readily available to the non-scientific community. This is partly because of its technical nature and partly because of the perception of a communication barrier between scientists and the general community. This perception, which appears to be widespread in our society, sometimes leads to mistrust or scepticism of scientists and their motives for animal-based research. This difficulty in communication is exacerbated by scientists not always being prepared to discuss their work in simple language to community groups such as schools and clubs, as well as by emotive and sometimes misleading media coverage.

The statement is sometimes made that scientific research operates behind closed doors. This should not be accepted, as most scientific research and teaching in Australia is publicly funded and for this reason a line of accountability is essential. An AEC is accountable to the Chief Executive of its institution and must abide by relevant State or Territory legislation and the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*. It is ultimately accountable through government to the general community.

Being a member of an AEC is important and worthwhile, although sometimes difficult, and always involves much reading and assimilation of information. It is particularly important that all members of AECs understand the functions of their committee and their part in this.

The guidelines comprise:

- a set of 20 pages of notes covering the role of an AEC, legislation and the Code of Practice, composition of the AEC (including the roles of the Chairperson and of each category), how the AEC functions; guidelines and policies and monitoring;
- a bibliography of useful background reading for AEC members, particularly Category C and D;
- copies of selected references from the bibliography;
- a copy of the *Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes*;
- copy of the relevant State or Territory legislation;
- a copy of *Animal Experimentation: a student guide to balancing the issues* by Vaughan Monamy.

The cost is \$35.00, including postage, from ANZCCART's Adelaide office.

## **Training Courses held in Victoria**

In introducing this topic, Dr Baker referred to the importance of new members of AECs, particularly in Category C or D, attending appropriate training courses. Such courses are offered each year by a number of Australian universities. For example, in SA, the University of Adelaide and Flinders University each offer a one day training course for honours and postgraduate students, animal technicians and AEC members.

Similar courses are offered in Melbourne at Monash University and at the University of Melbourne.

### **1. Monash University - Mr Arthur Hui**

Mr Hui is the Animal Ethics Officer at Monash University, which has 12 AECs - one at a hospital, two at the Monash Medical Centre and the other nine in various Departments on a number of Campuses. Each is a properly constituted committee, whose Chairman is usually a senior academic. There is also a central Monash University Animal Welfare Committee, whose role is to ensure that high ethical standards are practised in the 12 AECs, as well as advising and implementing uniform policies. The Central Committee also has a role in teaching and training of postgraduate students and new academic and technical staff.

The training comprises theoretical as well as practical sessions and comprises four main modules, as well as four specialised modules. There is also a topic on alternatives to animal use, which includes practical instruction on laboratory animal handling using models of rats and rabbits, which allow students to practise procedures such as intravenous injection and passing a stomach tube.

Staff from the animal house also provide demonstrations of how to handle live animals.

The course provided training this year to about 200 postgraduate students, each of whom receives a set of notes and is asked to complete an exit questionnaire.

These training courses are also available for AEC members, as well as members of staff, to attend. New members of AECs are provided with a copy of the Act, the Code of Practice and some other relevant information. The Animal Ethics Office also keeps a number of videos, including that from last year's course on laboratory animal anaesthesia and analgesia run by Professor Paul Flecknell from the University of Newcastle, UK. The first two modules are more appropriate for AEC members, as they cover the theory, more than the last two, which involve learning practical skills.

### **2. University of Melbourne - Dr Lyndal Scott**

The University of Melbourne runs a training course once a year, which this year attracted 140 people. A manual is provided, which is very similar to that provided by Monash University.

Category C members on AECs are welcome to attend the annual training course and a workshop specifically for them was held a couple of years ago. AEC members, by attending such courses, are exposed to the issues, standards and common problems. They are encouraged to visit the institutional animal house and meet the animal care staff, so that they can interact with them as part of their role on the AEC.

Melbourne University has a Central AEC, responsible for policy issues of six separate AECs, representing the various Institutes, Faculties and Departments which use animals.

## **What to look for in facility inspections. Bureau of Animal Welfare, Victoria - Dr Andrew Cameron**

Dr Cameron discussed the monitoring role that the Bureau envisages for AECs and in which Category C members play an important part. He referred to the Victorian legislation - the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* and its Regulations and to the *Victorian Code of Practice of the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes* and its national counterpart.

There are guidelines available for animal house standards, e.g., from universities and research institutes, and ANZCCART will be publishing a monograph on the husbandry and housing of laboratory animals.

The Code of Practice refers to the need for regular inspections of all housing and laboratory areas by members of the AEC and for appropriate records to be maintained. AECs must ensure that adequate records are kept on the acquisition, breeding, health, care, housing, use and disposal of animals.

A person or committee inspecting an animal facility should be able to leave and be broadly satisfied that the conditions of the Code are being met (or not). This should occur at least once a year and probably twice yearly.

When he does an inspection, he divides it into the following areas;

- management and staffing;
- the animals and their enclosures; and
- documentation and records keeping.

It is a good idea to arrive with a checklist, including all currently approved procedures. This will require talking to the researchers and technicians who are actually doing the approved procedures. There is a temptation by AEC members, once procedures have been approved, not to follow up to ensure that what is actually being done has been approved. This includes talking to the manager and staff of the animal house. Are the staff properly supervised? Do they have protective clothing? Do they know what are the signs of ill-health or behavioural problems in their animals?

It is also important to look at the communication between the person in charge of the animal house and the researchers. What power does the animal house manager have if something goes wrong or the animals are suffering pain or distress? Do they know what their responsibilities are?

The animals' primary enclosures must be examined to ensure adequacy of food, water, shelter and that they are escape-proof. Does the enclosure meet the animals' behavioural needs?

It must be large enough to ensure the animals' well-being. Noise in the animal house should be considered. Although it may appear quiet to the person doing the inspection, a lot of equipment can produce ultrasound which can be distressing to animals. It may be advisable to have a radio playing to mask the sound. Noisy species (e.g., pigs and non-human primates) should be kept out of hearing of species which are quiet (e.g., rodents and rabbits).

Lighting is very important, particularly with regard to the duration of the photoperiod and to its intensity. Guidelines for animal houses should take into account the light requirements of various

species. Rodents and lagomorphs are crepuscular and albinos are very sensitive to bright light. The photoperiod is very important with respect to circadian rhythms and to breeding.

Bedding is also important. It absorbs waste fluids and also provides a substrate for digging, building and hiding in certain species.

Vermin control is important, as is security to keep out humans. Are there appropriate places for isolation if required?

Adequate ventilation and air exchange is very important, as is the control of temperature and relative humidity in the animal house.

Documentation and record-keeping in the animal facility should be scrutinised by the AEC. Every animal house should have:

- cage labelling, including details of responsible researchers;
- a list of AEC approvals;
- copies of the Act, Regulations, Permits and The Code of Practice;
- a manual of Standard Operating Procedures;
- records of breeding, disease, mortality and post-mortems; and
- emergency contacts.

In summary, the critical things for a person inspecting a facility are to look at the animals carefully and see whether the environment, as far as is possible, is meeting their basic and behavioural needs and to talk to the researchers to ensure that what they are doing is what the AEC has approved.

## **Summary of the Workshop - Dr Lyndal Scott**

A key issue is that, because animal-based research is largely publicly funded, the government and the general community decide how much will be allocated to health and to research.

Glenys Oogjes in her talk alluded to the confluence of government, science and the community and the importance in that of the AEC system. Many Category C and D members can feel isolated and sometimes a little threatened. However, no particular category holds a monopoly on virtue.

Times and attitudes have changed in the 12 years since she began training courses at the University of Melbourne. Progress continues, although the goalposts tend to move, making it difficult to assess how much has been achieved.

While some may feel that change is slower than they would like, she believed there has been a huge shift in attitudes regarding animal use in research and attitudes to it., both within the university and outside.

It is very important that animal house managers participate actively in the AEC and that AEC members are able to discuss protocols and problems with them.

No one has a particular monopoly on the AEC and everyone brings a different perspective. All opinions are valuable and assist in continuing debate, improving attitudes and in dealing with the overwhelming amount of work associated with the functioning of an AEC.

**ATTENDANCE AT WORKSHOP FOR CATEGORY C MEMBERS OF AECs**  
**Gryphon Gallery, University of Melbourne, Friday, 23 April 1999**

NAME	ORGANISATION
ANDERSON, Ms Mary	University of Melbourne
ANNING, Tim	University of Melbourne
ARKINSTALL, Dr Traci	Peter MacCallum Cancer Institute, Melbourne
BAKER, Dr Robert	ANZCCART, Adelaide
BAILEY, Insp. Darren	RSPCA, Victoria
BAITZ, Ms Patricia	Monash University
BARLOW, Ruston	Howard Florey Institute
BARNETT, Dr John	Victorian Institute of Animal Science
BARRACLOUGH, Dr Colin	University of Melbourne
BROWN, Dr Ainslie	St Vincents Hospital, Melbourne
BROWN, Peter	RSPCA, Victoria
CAMERON, Dr Andrew	Dept. of the Environment & Natural Resources, Vic.
CONOLE, Dr Jane	University of Melbourne
DE FRAGA, Ms Carole	Monash University
GEDDES, Stephanie	Animals Australia, Melbourne
GORMAN, Insp. Guy	RSPCA, Victoria
HAMBLING, Ms Jill	St Vincents Hospital, Melbourne
HICKEY, Insp. Darren	RSPCA, Victoria
HIGGS, Sr Kathleen	St Vincents Hospital, Melbourne
HOLLEY, Dr Gillian	University of Melbourne
HUGHES, Kirsten	RSPCA, Victoria
HUI, Arthur	Monash University
LANGSHAW, Insp. Neroli	RSPCA, Victoria
LAY, Fr Kenneth	Bunge Meat Industries Ltd., Corowa
LEE, Dr Alison	Dept. of the Environment & Natural Resources, Vic.
McKAY, Sue	St Vincents Hospital, Melbourne
MILLIGAN, MsAngela	Royal Melbourne Hospital
MITCHELL, Dr Alana	NHMRC
MUIRDEN, April	RSPCA, Victoria
NICHOLS, Jason	RSPCA, Victoria
OOGJES, Glenys	Animals Australia, Melbourne
PAVIA, Jill	Deakin University
PENSON, Dr Peter	Dept. of the Environment & Natural Resources, Vic
POINTON, Jill	University of Melbourne
RATNAYAKE, Mangalika	RSPCA, Victoria
SCOTT, Dr Lynn	University of Melbourne
SHAW, Jim	St Vincents Hospital.
SMITH, Dr Robyn	Bunge Meat Industries Ltd. Corowa
VICKERY, Dr Andrew	RSPCA, Victoria
WALDUCK, Dr Rick	University of Melbourne
WARD, Scott	RSPCA, Victoria
WARREN, Dr Cedar	University of Melbourne
WATT, Dr Angela	Royal Melbourne. Hospital
WEBB, Dr Carole	Cat Protection Society of Victoria
WIRTH, Dr Hugh	RSPCA, Victoria