

Karolinska Institutet Animal Welfare Body Annual report 2019

Background

The Karolinska Institutet (KI) has the mission to improve human health and to find new strategies to curb human diseases. Many of the research projects at KI are based on data from laboratory animals of different species. Research involving laboratory animal is regulated by The Animal Welfare Act 2018:1192, The Animal Welfare Ordinance 2019:66 and The Swedish Board of Agriculture's Regulations and General Advice on experimental animals, SJVFS 2019:9 Saknr L150. All animals used for scientific purposes are protected by law and must be treated in the best possible way, both, regarding housing and experimental conditions according to the legislation in Sweden. Each organization carrying out animal research must establish an animal welfare body (AWB), with well-defined roles and a composition of professionals stipulated in L150, chapter 5.

The AWB at KI has been in place since 2013 and was reorganized in January 2019 to comply with new regulations. AWB at KI is an independent authority, which during 2019 consisted of seven members: the chairmen, the named animal care and welfare officer, a veterinarian, a researcher and its deputy, an animal technician personnel and its deputy. In all matters concerning aquatic animals or non-human primates an expert respectively an ethologist was consulted. From July 2018, the AWB has the mandate to take decisions on amendments to ethics permits following an application from the principal investigator. At KI all AWB decisions are taken by majority vote and the AWB reports directly to the Committee of Research and the Site License Holder.

Meetings and working structure

The AWB delegates met regularly, every 3 weeks, for consultations and formal decisions. At the 15 meetings during 2019, a total of 75 amendment applications have been handled, leading to 68 approvals and 7 rejections. 54 of the amendments were administrative decisions, concerning changes of animal facilities or changes of responsible principal investigator. Twenty-one amendment applications involved other changes which did not risked affecting the welfare of experimental animals in a negative way.

The AWB has systematically reviewed SOPs (standard operational procedures) for animal care and veterinary plans at KM facilities. Also, AWB analyzed reports from the CDFN (Central Animal Ethics Committee) concerning the retrospective evaluations of animal experiments.

Outreach activities

On November 6th, the AWB organized a half-day workshop on the topic: "Animal welfare body and the support to science at KI." Following a presentation of AWB work at KI, three contributions highlighted 3R work in resent research projects and in animal care at KIs animal facilities. In group discussions the 78 participants from KI, Karolinska University Hospital site and Stockholm University discussed in mixed groups three questions: how AWB work impacts their work, how animal welfare influences research, and suggestions on how to improve 3R at KI. A synopsis of the discussions was compiled and distributed to all participants and will be followed up.

On October 17th, representatives from the AWB at KI participated at the national AWB meeting in Gothenburg. The meeting, organized by the Swedish 3R Center, highlighted common experiences and differences in AWBs work at a large variety of organizations where animal research is carried out in Sweden, from research centers to universities and pharmaceutical companies. A general conclusion is that more exchange of experience between AWBs and better communication between AWBs and authorities (The County Administrative boards) would be greatly appreciated to harmonize AWB work.

An AWB representative participated at a meeting with a delegation from the French Embassy and during the AAALAC accreditation of Astrid Fagræus Laboratory facility.

Goals for 2020

- Compile recommendations for assessment templates to score the animal condition in specific animal models. This will be done in collaboration with researcher.
- Invite scientists using various animal models at KI to AWB-meetings for knowledge transfer.
- Continuously review and analyze SOPs, retrospective reports from CDFN, plans and strategy documents involving animal welfare. The information will be used to improve the animal welfare in current research at KI.
- Outreach in form of lectures and workshops (CPD activities).
- Continuously work on how AWB can support science at KI.
- Networking with AWBs from other Universities in the region, to improve and facilitate research projects / research groups active at different sites e.g. common workshops.

Stockholm, the 16th of January 2020