

Karolinska Institutet Animal welfare body Annual report 2023

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**Karolinska
Institutet**



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Introduction

Karolinska Institutet (KI) has, as one of the leading medical universities, the mission to improve human health and to find new strategies to fight human diseases. The use of laboratory animals is pivotal for many research projects in basic and translational science at Karolinska Institutet. 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 laboratory animals, SJVFS 2019:9 Saknr L150 (called L150 from hereon). According to the Swedish legislation described above, all animals used for scientific purposes are protected by law and must be treated in the best possible way, both regarding their housing as well as regarding experimental conditions. The Swedish legislation, namely L150 chapter 5, also defines that each organization carrying out laboratory animal research must establish an Animal Welfare Body (AWB). The AWB at KI was established 1st of January 2013 and is an independent authority which reports directly to the Committee for research and the establishment license holder. The AWB consists of eight members: the chairmen, the named animal care and welfare officer (NACWO), a veterinarian and its deputy, a researcher, and its deputy, as well as an animal technician and its deputy. Additionally, for matters concerning aquatic species or non-human primates, an expert in the field or an ethologist will take part in

the discussion and decisions, respectively. Other specialists may be co-opted if deemed necessary. All members of the AWB are appointed by the Committee for research for a 3-year period. The current mandate runs from 2023-01-01 to 2025-12-31. Since July 2018, principal investigators from KI can apply to the AWB for addendums to their ethics license if the addendum meets the requirements defined in L150 (please see the AWB webpage for details). The AWB takes all decisions by majority vote.

Members of the AWB

Lars Bräutigam (Chair)

Elisabet Andersson (NACWO, NIO)

Bengt Eriksson (vet.)

Maria Averstad (vet., suppleant)

Camilla Svensson (researcher)

Velmurugesan Arulampalam (researcher, suppleant)

Caroline Lindqvist (animal caretaker)

Sara Ferm (animal caretaker, suppleant)

Mikaela Sandbacka (etolog)

Activities 2023

Amendments

During 2023, the AWB at KI handled in total 21 amendments. Twelve of those amendments were of administrative character such as change or addition of animal facilities, or exchange of the principal investigator on an ethics license. The remaining applications pertained to modifications of experimental parameters that had previously been approved in the underlying ethics license. The AWB performs a detailed investigation for these applications to assess whether the proposed adjustments meet the prerequisites stipulated in L150 utilizing the specific competences represented within the organization.

Projects and recommendations

The AWB has established and published three recommendations during 2023. Recommendation #10 (Dnr: 1-210/2023) describes how to establish, breed, and maintain mice strains based on scientific evidence and with animal welfare in focus. Recommendation #11 (Dnr: 1-211/2023), is like recommendation #10 but directed to zebrafish lines. Recommendation #12 (Dnr: 1-644/2023) provides evidence-based information why both sexes should be used in scientific experiments. Furthermore, the AWB has overseen the updating of the health scoring sheet for adult zebrafish and the new scoring sheet is now implemented

into KI's veterinary plans. The AWB is also coordinating a project concerning the development of novel environmental enrichments for zebrafish.

Courses, conferences, and workshops

On September 25th, the AWB organized together with EARA, the European Animal Research Association, a half-day conference on Improving openness in animal research. More than 50 people, both internal and external, joined the conference. Kirk Leach from EARA presented their organization and the importance of working towards a transparency agreement (TA) which already has been signed by more than 500 other institutions in the EU. Inês Serrenho, a PhD student and EARA Ambassador in Portugal shared her experiences how a TA significantly improved the collaboration between different stakeholders. Madeleine Svärd Huss, Chief Press Officer at KI, presented the communication strategy of KI and KI's Alzheimer researcher Per Nilsson shared his personal experience on actively communicating about his animal research to national media and patient organizations.

On October 17th, members of the AWB joined the national animal welfare body meeting where the negative effects of lifting mice on their tail was one of the focus areas. Based on this discussion, a working group within the AWB was formed who will coordinate a project to phase out lifting mice on their tail in all KIs animal facilities.

In 2023, the AWB has established a collaboration with a researcher that runs a study on aggression in male mice in a number of different animal facilities in Sweden. The AWB coordinates the project at KI's animal facilities. The project will continue during 2024.

Other activities

The AWB has established a new homepage which provides improved functionality and easy access to information concerning animal welfare and 3R. The AWB has also been part of a project led by the Swedish 3R center with the goal to harmonize the handling of amendments between different animal welfare bodies. The chairman of the AWB has become ordinary member of the Swedish National committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes in February 2023.

Representatives (NACWO and Veterinarian) from the AWB have been involved in audits, required for collaborations with KI researchers, performed by AAALAC and companies.

Planned activities 2024

Since 1st of January 2024, the price for submitting ethical applications or addendums significantly increased and the AWB sees a risk that addendums for improving animal welfare will not be submitted in the same extent anymore. Therefore, we plan to reach out to all ethics cense holders at KI and inform them again which addendums the AWB can decide on.

The AWB will work to establish guidelines for KI researchers that perform animal experiments abroad. Those guidelines will be harmonized with guidelines for research involving patients in third countries.

The AWB will continue to focus on communication of research involving animals.

The project for phasing out tail-lift of mice will be presented to KMs steering group and implemented during 2024.

On March 10th, the AWB together with JAX/Charles River, will organize a half-day conference on metabolic diseases.

The AWB will continuously review and analyze retrospective reports from CDFN, guidelines and strategy documents involving animal welfare. The information will be used to improve animal welfare in current research at all KI institutions in communication with the researchers and in recommendations from AWB.

The AWB will continue to network with other animal welfare bodies in the Stockholm/Uppsala region to facilitate research projects and to meet the demand of research groups which are active at different sites.

