

# NAEAC Newsletter June 2020

## Update from the Chair of NAEAC



### Kia ora.

This update is being written as we approach 'normality' after a long period of upheaval that just a few months ago very few of us would have ever expected, let alone experienced. New language has crept into our vocabulary and we have had to adapt to new ways of living and working.

Some things may never be the same as they were before this global pandemic. During the COVID alert period, many of us embraced modern technologies we had previously not heard of. It is likely that for some a new 'normal' will be different from what we took for granted just six months ago.

As NAEAC Chair, I try to attend as many AEC meetings as I can in an observer's capacity. I attended an AEC meeting via Zoom during level 3. As could be expected there was little business, with only one application to consider. While the AEC members were happy with the electronic meeting format, a quick straw poll indicated a strong preference to meet in person in the same room.

Most organisations have put in place an emergency management plan, which usually covers such things as natural disaster. However, a pandemic lockdown is something not many would have previously anticipated.

NAEAC is interested in hearing your recent experiences, especially around how AECs were able to function in a lockdown situation. In the email that this Newsletter is attached to is an invitation to complete a simple online survey that asks how AECs coped. I would appreciate you taking the time (about 5 minutes) to complete it.

### Animals and COVID-19.

I have just received the latest Understanding Animal Research UK (UAR) Newsletter. As might be expected, there is a lot of reference to COVID-19 and especially the use of animals in vaccine research.

Coronaviruses affect animals as well as affecting humans. They are also zoonotic. There have been previous transmissions of Coronaviruses from animals to humans. For example, human infection by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV) was first recorded in 2002. Research suggests that it was transmitted from bats to civet cats to humans. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) was identified in 2012. In this case, research has suggested that dromedary camels are a major reservoir host and an animal source of MERS infection in humans. However, the exact role of dromedaries in transmission of the virus and the exact route(s) of transmission are unknown. It is interesting to note that several known coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

UAR commissioned a national survey during lockdown in the UK in late March 2020. A majority of respondents (77%) said they trusted UK scientists to provide a solution to COVID-19, and 95% said they expected worldwide collaboration to find a solution. A high proportion (92%) were aware that animals are used to try to develop new treatments and procedures for specific diseases and almost three quarters of people (73%) accepted that scientific research using animals such as mice, dogs and monkeys, would be important to developing treatments and vaccines for COVID-19. Of survey respondents, 75% said that they could accept the use of animals in scientific research as long as there was no unnecessary suffering to the animals and no alternative. 14% said that they could not accept the use of animals in research under these circumstances.

You can read the survey report [here](#).

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Kind regards,

## NAEAC member profile – Dianne Wepa

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Dr Dianne Wepa originates from Hastings, New Zealand. Her iwi is Ngati Kahungunu.

Dianne's PhD focused on how Māori engaged with healthcare services. She has published textbooks on Cultural Safety and Clinical Supervision.

Dianne is a registered social worker with interests in mental health, youth health and Māori health. Apart from her position on NAEAC, Dianne's current governance roles include The Nursing Council of New Zealand, Audiologist Society Complaints' Board and Lotteries Commission.

Dianne coordinates a range of courses focused on First Peoples' Health at the University of South Australia and is currently supervising research students on topics such as the impact of digital technology on suicide prevention, the social impact on dementia and fathers' use of Kangaroo Care with new-born babies.

Dianne's home page is <https://people.unisa.edu.au/Dianne.Wepa>

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## ANZCCART News

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### What is current at ANZCCART?

ANZCCART Chair, Pete Hodgson, completed his term in April, and ANZCCART (NZ) now has a new Chair, Associate Professor Pat Cragg, who is Acting DVC Academic, University of Otago. Pat is well known by many in the field of Animal Welfare/RTT. Her academic training was originally in zoology, then comparative physiology and finally human physiology and she has published in research areas of lizard respiratory physiology, animal models of human respiratory control, lung surfactant deficiency and cardiac function.

ANZCCART also currently has several competitions running, a couple of which have applications closing very soon. You can find more information [here](#):

- AEC member of the year (deadline 19 June)
- Animal Care Award (deadline 19 June)
- Secondary Student Essay Competition (deadline 21 September)
- Communication Competition (deadline 30 September)

### ANZCCART Conference 2020: "Openness in Animal Research"

***Given the current situation with Covid-19, this year's ANZCCART conference was postponed. ANZCCART recently resolved to hold the conference in Queenstown in July 2021. The hope is to roll over the excellent group of speakers and abstracts that were planned for this year. Further details about the new dates for the conference will be provided in due course.***

The conference theme is openness in animal research and teaching; topics, include:

- Engaging stories about research openness through different eyes, e.g. as a technician or research assistant; an Animal Ethics Committee member; a researcher; an institution; the media; the public.
- Thoughts about openness in animal research from different perspectives (e.g. different cultural perspectives; openness about animal research with colleagues/family; benefits or risks of openness, psychology, sociology, law, or ethics of openness).
- Research openness in practice (e.g. examples of what has worked; what has not; lessons learnt).
- Openness to new approaches (e.g. through the 3Rs; use of research registers).

## **AEC APPLICATION FORMS**

**The Animal Welfare Act 1999 s100 Criteria** states that: In considering any application for the approval of a project and in setting, varying, or revoking conditions of the approval of a project, every animal ethics committee must have regard to such of the following matters as are relevant:

- (a) the purposes of this Part; and
- (b) any matters that the committee is required to consider by regulations made under this Act; and
- (c) the scientific or educational objectives of the project; and
- (d) the harm to, or the distress felt by, the animals as a result of the manipulation, and the extent to which that harm or distress can be alleviated by any means (including, where the pain or distress cannot be held within reasonable levels, the abandonment of the manipulation or the humane destruction of animals); and
- (e) whether the design of the experiment or demonstration is such that it is reasonable to expect that the objectives of the experiment or demonstration will be met; and
- (f) the factors that have been taken into account in the choice of animal species; and
- (fa) the extent to which there has been—
  - (i) assessment of the suitability of using non-sentient or non-living alternatives in the project; and
  - (ii) replacement of animals as subjects with suitable non-sentient or non-living alternatives; and
- (g) whether the number of animals to be used is the minimum necessary to ensure a meaningful interpretation of the findings and the statistical validity of the findings; and
- (h) whether adequate measures will be taken to ensure the general health and welfare of animals before, during, and after manipulation; and
- (i) whether suitably qualified persons will be engaged in supervising and undertaking the research, testing, or teaching; and
- (j) whether any duplication of an experiment is proposed and, if so, whether any such duplication will be undertaken only if the original experiment—
  - (i) is flawed in a way that was not able to be predicted; or
  - (ii) needs to be duplicated for the purpose of confirming a result that was unexpected or has far-reaching implications; and
- (k) whether the same animals are to be used repeatedly in successive projects, and, if so, the cumulative effect of the successive projects on the welfare of the animals; and
- (l) whether there is a commitment to ensuring that findings of any experiment will be adequately used, promoted, or published; and
- (m) any other matters that the committee considers relevant.

An AEC Application form should therefore contain a set of mandatory questions, which must provide answers that enable the committee to deliberate against the criteria set out in s100 of the Act. Does the application form that is submitted to your AEC include questions that specifically require an applicant to describe the following?

- how pain is to be managed during manipulations and recovery periods
- why the species being used has been chosen and specifically describing what alternatives to the use of animals have been considered
- the statistical validity of the number of animals being used
- how animal health and welfare will be managed prior to the manipulation, during the manipulation and recovery periods
- the qualifications of all persons manipulating and caring for the animals
- if the application duplicates previous work; and if it does, is there justification describing why that duplication is necessary
- if the animals have been used previously and if so, what is the cumulative impact on them
- how results will be disseminated

**If your application form does not specifically ask for all this information; maybe it is time to review the form and update it.**

## THE 3RS

### International survey on non-aversive handling of laboratory mice

<https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/news/international-survey-non-aversive-handling-laboratory-mice>



A new paper published in [PLOS ONE](#) presents the results of a survey of non-aversive handling methods for picking up laboratory mice.

The international survey, conducted between September 2018 and January 2019, gathered data on the handling methods being used, views on the impact of tunnel handling on mouse welfare and scientific outcomes, and common obstacles that may be preventing the uptake of non-aversive handling. 390 researchers, animal technicians and others responded from 27 countries.

Only 18% of respondents exclusively used non-aversive handling methods. However, the vast majority of participants were convinced that non-aversive handling improves animal welfare and scientific outcomes.

The survey revealed concerns regarding a perceived increase in time required for non-aversive methods compared with tail handling, and a perceived incompatibility of tunnel handling with restraint, health checks and other routine procedures. The discussion tackles these misconceptions and provides solutions to the obstacles, in line with advice from the NC3Rs.

#### Reference

Henderson LJ, Smulders TV, Roughan JV (2020) Identifying obstacles preventing the uptake of tunnel handling methods for laboratory mice: An international thematic survey. *PLOS ONE* 15(4): e0231454. [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0231454](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0231454)

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### The Aotearoa New Zealand

#### John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award

NAEAC will shortly call for applications for the 2020 Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award. The prize, which celebrates achievement in implementation of the Three Rs, consists of a certificate and a financial award of \$5,000.

The Aotearoa New Zealand Three Rs Award is co-ordinated by NAEAC with funding support from:

AgResearch Ltd  
 The Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching  
 Lincoln University  
 Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research  
 Massey University  
 The University of Otago  
 Victoria University of Wellington

Full terms of reference and application forms are available from the NAEAC Secretariat via email at ([naeac@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:naeac@mpi.govt.nz)).

## NAEAC AECs WORKSHOP 2020

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The 2020 AECs Workshop will be held on Thursday 19 November 2020. The theme of this year's Workshop is: "**Getting it right**".

It will still be a NAEAC AECs Workshop; but not as we know it.

The unprecedented environment that arose during the COVID-19 response changed the way we work; certainly, in the short term. As you read this, we are just becoming used to almost returning to 'normal' as we adjust to COVID alert level 1, 75 days after the country locked down on 25<sup>th</sup> March. As I write this, there are no active COVID-19 cases in New Zealand.

Many of us have discovered the 'joys' of Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and other online meeting and streaming platforms.

The members of NAEAC were all effected also. Some have research and/or teaching commitments, some worked in an office 'bubble' at home. Nobody travelled by air for at least 7 weeks.

NAEAC's May meeting was scheduled on what turned out to be the first day of moving to COVID alert level 2. The meeting was planned to be held in Wellington. Obviously, we did not travel! Instead, we held our meeting using ZOOM. We were spread between Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Dunedin and Adelaide.

One of the items on the Agenda was planning for the biennial November AECs Workshop.

Those who have attended one of these workshops previously will know that we always ask for an evaluation form to be completed. This enables us to understand what it is that you like (or dislike) about the day and to identify possible topics for the next workshop. After the 2018 workshop, we also sent a SurveyMonkey poll to people who had not attended to help us understand why that was.

We always receive comments, especially from lay members, indicating that travel, time, lack of institutional support, or reluctance to be absent from the workplace all contribute to an attendance that is lower than what we would like. NAEAC has previously considered moving the venue, but logistics around planning, venue hire and catering would become difficult for our Wellington-based secretariat to manage. Changing location does nothing to ease the perceived difficulties it merely shifts the focus as to who is affected. Wellington is at least 'central'. But even so, attending the Workshop from Auckland or Dunedin means catching a plane at 6.00am and being unlikely to arrive home before 6.30pm. From provincial locations it may be even worse.

While we were considering these things, the situation we were meeting in presented itself as the solution. Given that we were meeting via ZOOM it became apparent that several members of NAEAC had used this medium (or one similar) over the previous seven weeks in a way that could easily be adapted to presenting a Workshop. And so; a decision was made.

The Workshop will go ahead, but for the first time ever it will be remotely hosted.

- you will not be travelling to Wellington to attend; all you will need to do is click on an electronic link
- you should be able to select the parts you want to attend
- we should still be able to have 'breakout sessions'

NAEAC sees this as an exciting step forward, which fits neatly into our 5-year Workplan that aims to Provide Clear Accessible Information and Communications and Enhance Relationships with AECs. As in previous years, NAEAC will encourage all code holders to support their institutional and lay AEC members to attend.

***Put a placeholder in your calendar now.***

## **FROM NAEAC'S MINUTES**

*This regular section in the NAEAC newsletter includes snippets from recent meeting minutes that I hope you find interesting.*

### **Mini tutorial: Operation of the Schools AEC**

At the February meeting, the Chair of the Schools' AEC spoke to NAEAC members. The uniqueness of the AEC was highlighted, particularly that it only dealt with projects submitted by teachers and school children.

Because the Ministry of Education did not hold a current code of ethical conduct, the New Zealand Association of Science Educators (NZASE) had applied to become a code holder in 2005 and set up its AEC the same year.

The AEC usually receives around 60 applications per year. Of those, 90% are from year 7 & 8 students preparing CREST projects or entering school science fairs.

The AEC usually only approves projects graded A or B and works hard to encourage teachers and students to understand their obligations in relation to animal ethics. Some of the initiatives included: sending mail outs to all schools; emphasising the importance of monitoring; and poster development for science fairs/conferences. The Schools' AEC uses local veterinarians from other AECs to assist with monitoring.

### **Deputy Chair**

By statute, NAEAC is required to elect one of its members as its deputy chairperson, at its first meeting each year.

Dr Rob Hazelwood was elected deputy chairperson of the committee for 2020.

### **Site visits**

Each year, NAEAC holds a meeting in a regional location outside Wellington. This is planned so that the members can visit code holders (and parented organisations), meet their AECs and view research facilities. This usually occurs in May.

This year of course, COVID level 3 put paid to travel. It is still hoped that the committee can hold a meeting in Auckland and that visits will focus on city-based institutions.

### **NAEAC's work plan/priorities for 2020**

At the February meeting NAEAC confirmed its workplan for 2020. This includes:

- Promoting public presence at NAEAC meetings
- Contributing to development of significant surgical procedures (SSP) regulations
- Reviewing Part 6 and the codes of ethical conduct review processes
- Exploring the value of a 4<sup>th</sup> R – Respect
- Planning and holding an AECs Workshop

### **Grading of Manipulations**

At the AEC Chairs meeting held in November 2019, there was some discussion on grading; especially grading of cumulative impact on animals. A specific question was raised as to whether a manipulation should be graded on its own or whether the impact of the whole research project (including routine husbandry treatments). There has also been discussion querying why the benefits of RTT are not reported. NAEAC has resolved to develop guidelines that will provide clarity to AECs.

### **AEC contact details**

Please remember to inform Linda Carsons ([linda.carsons@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:linda.carsons@mpi.govt.nz)) if details for your AEC's contact person change.

### **Dates for your diary**

**tba** – call for applications for The Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award

**26-28 July 2020** – “Openness in Animal Research” ANZCCART Conference, Queenstown  
**Postponed until July 2021**

**19 November 2020** – “Getting it right” NAEAC AECs Virtual Workshop.

### **Contacts:**

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