

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



ANIMAL WELFARE

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

Annual Report

1 January to 31 December 2025

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee
C/- Ministry for Primary Industries
P O Box 2526
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

ISBN No: 978-1-991380-82-1 (online)

April 2026

NAEAC

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

Chairperson's Comment

Tēnā koutou katoa

2025 has been a productive year for NAEAC, and I am pleased to share some of the highlights of our work in delivering on our 2024–2028 strategic plan. A notable piece of work this year was NAEAC's advice to the Minister on the status of larval fish under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. We continue to recommend that fish be declared 'animals' for the purposes of the Act at the end of the yolk-sac larval stage, a recommendation we believe better reflects current scientific understanding of sentience and will strengthen protections in the research, testing, and teaching (RTT) system. We also reviewed and supported the approval of two new codes of ethical conduct.

Building the capability of animal ethics committees (AECs) remains a core commitment. We continued our well-received webinar series in 2025, hosting sessions on non-compliance, impact grading, and good decision-making. NAEAC members also carried out visits to code holders in the Wellington region and attended AEC meetings in an observer capacity, all of which inform our understanding of how the system is working in practice.

It was a pleasure alongside ANZCCART NZ to jointly present the 2024 Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield 3Rs Implementation Award to co-recipients Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe and Dr Lee Morris of Equibreed ART Ltd. These awardees as well as those nominated for awards have shown great commitment to promoting and applying the concepts of replacement, reduction and refinement of use of animal in RTT, and we were encouraged by the innovation shown by the researchers and educators in this space.



In closing I wish to acknowledge the great contributions made by two of our committee members who retired in 2025. We are grateful to Dr Dianne Wepa and Ms Rachel Heeney for their dedication and expertise and wish them well in their future endeavours. Although sad to see our colleagues end their term, we were pleased to welcome Dr Tim Kelly and Dr Jim Webster as new NAEAC members. Finally, as always, I would like to thank all of the NAEAC members, and the secretariat for their work and commitment in supporting the animal welfare system in New Zealand.

I look forward to us continuing this good work in the year ahead.

Professor Nat Waran
Chairperson, NAEAC

Membership

Committee Members	Expiry of Appointment
<p>Professor Natalie K Waran BSc (Hons), PhD</p> <p>Founding Director – Navigate Welfare International Animal Welfare Consultancy (Independent Chairperson)</p>	31.10.27
<p>Dr Jacquie L Harper BSc (Hons), PhD</p> <p>General Manager – Research and Innovation, Bragato Research Institute (Elected Deputy Chairperson 2025)</p>	31.10.25 ¹
<p>Dr Angenita (Nita) B Harding BVSc, MBA (Dist)</p> <p>Veterinarian</p>	31.10.25 ¹
<p>Ms Rachel A Heeney BSc, Dip Tchg</p> <p>Head of Biology – Epsom Girls Grammar School (Nominated by the Ministry of Education)</p>	29.01.25 (retired)
<p>Dr Michael R King B Appl Sc (Hons), PhD</p> <p>Senior Lecturer – Bioethics Centre, University of Otago (Nominated by the Health Research Council of New Zealand)</p>	31.10.25 ¹
<p>Dr Dianne T H Wepa RSW, PhD</p> <p>Senior Lecturer, Adjunct – Auckland University of Technology</p>	29.01.25 (retired)
<p>Professor Laura Bennet MA, PhD</p> <p>Professor of Physiology – Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, The University of Auckland</p>	31.10.27 ¹
<p>Dr Janine A Duckworth BAg Sc (Hons), PhD</p> <p>Scientist – Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research New Zealand Ltd</p>	31.10.27 ¹
<p>Dr Joanne Holter BVSc, PDip (Business)</p> <p>Technical Market Development Manager New Zealand – MSD Animal Health (Nominated by Agcarm Inc)</p>	31.10.25 ¹
<p>Dr Jessica Walker BSc, MSc, PDip (Higher Education), PhD</p> <p>National Science Manager – Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RNZSPCA) (Nominated by the RNZSPCA)</p>	31.10.25 ¹
<p>Dr Timothy Kelly BSc, MSc, PhD</p> <p>(Nominated by the Ministry of Education)</p>	31.10.27
<p>Dr James Webster BSc, MSc, PhD</p>	31.10.27

¹ Members whose appointments expired in 2025 continue to serve as needed until replacement appointments are made.

Fees

Government policy requires the disclosure of fees paid to members of statutory boards and committees. The daily fee paid to committee members during 2025 was \$400 for members and \$550 for the chairperson.

Members are paid the fee for attending meetings with an additional allowance for preparation time.

Members are also reimbursed for travel expenses. In addition, the chairperson and, on occasion, other members may be paid fees for representing the committee at other meetings or for carrying out significant extra work on the committee's behalf.

Total gross fees paid	\$31,535.00
Total reimbursed travelling expenses	\$748.27
TOTAL FOR 2025	\$28,119.27

MEMBER	GROSS FEES PAID IN 2024
Natalie Waran	\$5775.00
Jacque Harper	\$2400.00
Nita Harding	\$4600.00
James Webster	\$1600.00
Michael King	\$2000.00
Timothy Kelly	\$2260.00
Laura Bennet	\$2000.00
Janine Duckworth	\$1800.00
Joanne Holter	\$5102.99
Jessica Walker	\$4288.32
TOTAL	\$31,535.00

Strategic Plan 2024 – 2028

The NAEAC strategic plan was reviewed by a NAEAC subcommittee in 2023. An updated draft of the strategic plan for 2024-2028 was developed and subsequently approved by NAEAC at its November 2023 general meeting. The approved NAEAC strategic plan aims to advance ethical use and improve animal welfare outcomes in RTT by providing clear, high-

quality, and robust advice and recommendations to the Minister, other high-level authorities, and AECs. The strategic plan creates the framework and direction for NAEAC's operational work plan and is aligned with four core strategic priorities. The plan is reviewed at the start of each year.

The strategic plan infographic is available on our website [here](#) as well as in [appendix one](#).

Statutory Activities

Section 63 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 (the Act) details the statutory functions of NAEAC.

This section of the Annual Report addresses NAEAC's work in 2025 under each of the functions listed in the Act.

Advice to the Minister on Ethical and Animal Welfare Issues Arising from Research, Testing, and Teaching

In late 2024, NAEAC was invited to provide advice to the Minister on larval fish, including zebrafish. The scope was to inform the Minister of NAEAC's view relating to the use of larval fish in research, testing and teaching. Larval fish are not considered 'animals' under the Act and are therefore not afforded protections under Part 6.

In accordance with its functions as described in Part 4 s63(a) of the Act, NAEAC formalised and provided advice to the Minister in 2025. NAEAC recommended that fish be declared to be 'animals', for the purposes of the Act, at the end of the yolk-sac larval stage; noting that live-bearing (viviparous) fish are covered by the Act from the point of birth.

Recommendations to the Minister Under Section 3(3) (relating to manipulation)

No recommendations were made to the Minister under section 3(3) of the Act during 2025.

Recommendations to the Director-General Under Section 85 (relating to use of non-human hominids)

No recommendations were made to the minister under section 85 of the Act during 2025.

Recommendations to the Director-General Concerning the Approval, Amendment, Suspension, or Revocation of any Code of Ethical Conduct

The committee's advice to the Director-General of the Ministry for Primary Industries resulted in both codes being approved under the Act.

Recommendations to the Minister Concerning the Setting of Standards and Policies for Codes of Ethical Conduct

No recommendations were made to the Minister relating to setting standards or policies for the development of codes of ethical conduct.

Provision of Information and Advice to Animal Ethics Committees

NAEAC continued to provide information to AECs in a variety of ways.

Online / via E-mail

Routine advice is provided on an as *required* basis to individual enquiries from the secretariat, Chair, and members of AECs.

NAEAC has several documents published on its webpage and these are updated regularly.

NAEAC newsletters

The NAEAC newsletter was temporarily paused in 2025 and is intended to resume in 2026.

AEC Webinar Series

As part of NAEAC's commitment to supporting AECs in New Zealand, NAEAC has previously hosted a biennial AEC workshop in alternate years between AEC Chairs meetings. These workshops provided a forum for AEC members to interact with NAEAC and other members and to engage on topical issues, exchange information, and stimulate discussion.

In 2024, NAEAC trialled a new format and, rather than hosting a one-off workshop, hosted a series of mini webinars. Feedback from stakeholders on this mechanism of engagement was very positive, with webinar accessibility being a key factor driving increased attendance. The format was continued in 2025 and NAEAC hosted three webinars on the below topics:

1. You have a non-compliance, now what?
2. Impact grading and consistency.
3. Good decision-making for AECs, including consensus.

The webinars were well attended with great engagement from AEC members, with roughly 30-40 attendees per webinar. The PowerPoint presentations from each webinar are available to view on the NAEAC website here.

Code holder and AEC visits

Once a year NAEAC visits code holders (and other organisations with an arrangement to use these codes), to meet with AECs and view research facilities.

The visits are for planned with AEC and facility managers and aim to:

The visits are not an audit exercise and neither the facilities nor the code holder or AEC are under review during the visit. Rather, these visits aim to:

- Familiarise NAEAC members with RTT work being carried out;
- Allow NAEAC members to understand the shared challenges and experiences of AEC members;

- Capture information on how NAEAC can best support AECs via NAEAC's AEC webinar series and overall work programme;
- Provide an opportunity to discuss various aspects of welfare, research, or teaching strategy in relation to RTT;
- Educate code holders and AEC members about the role of NAEAC within the RTT system; and
- Provide code holders and AEC members a forum for asking any questions they may have of NAEAC.

AEC attendance

To support NAEAC's relationship with AECs and its ongoing commitment to professional development, as well as to understand how different AECs operate under their respective codes of ethical conduct, NAEAC members are encouraged to attend AEC meetings. NAEAC members attend/visit strictly on an invited observer/familiarisation basis to support the NAEAC's functions as outlined under the Act and to ensure and identify topics which may be of use for the NAEAC AEC workshops and AEC Chairs' Meetings.

Recommendations for Approval by the Director-General of Persons suitable for Appointment as Accredited Reviewers

NAEAC made no recommendations for an accredited reviewer to be appointed nor reappointed in 2025. The committee received notification of one resignation and that two accredited reviewers remain active.

Consideration of the Reports of Independent Reviews of Code Holders and Animal Ethics Committees

Performance reports (prepared by the independent reviewer) regarding current but expiring codes were provided to NAEAC and were reviewed alongside the relevant draft codes of ethical conduct for approval. Reports are referred to when NAEAC makes its recommendation to the Director-General on whether a draft code is suitable for approval.

Recommendations to the Minister Under Section 118(3) (relating to the power of the Minister to approve research or testing)

No requests for advice relating to section 118(3) were made to NAEAC in 2025.

Other Activities

Sub-committee activities in 2025

As always, sub-committees focused on various areas of NAEAC's work programmes. In 2025 development of the Good Practice Guide for the Use of Animals in Research, Testing, and Teaching (GPG) was separated from the broader work of the Publications Sub-committee and a dedicated GPG Sub-committee was established. The GPG Sub-committee now has sole responsibility for developing and maintaining the GPG, NAEAC's core guidance document for the RTT sector. This change recognises the scale and importance of ongoing GPG development.

The sub-committee developed a substantial body of draft revisions to the GPG, extending its guidance in key areas of practical importance for those involved in RTT, including harm-benefit analysis and information management. These draft revisions are subject to legal review and full committee approval before incorporation into the Guide.

NAEAC's 2025 webinar series covered AEC decision-making, non-compliance, and impact grading consistency. As the GPG underpins much of NAEAC's guidance in these areas, the webinars drew on its content, and feedback from these sessions is informing the sub-committee's ongoing work.

Openness Initiatives

Transparency is crucial for animal use in research, testing, and testing and maintaining a social license to operate. NAEAC is fully supportive of the Australian & New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART) Openness Agreement initiatives and continued to encourage code of ethical conduct holders to participate in 2025.

Promoting the 3Rs

The 3Rs principles (replacement, reduction, and refinement) provide a framework for performing more humane RTT with animals.

The 3Rs refer to:

- **replacement** of animals with a non living or non-sentient alternative wherever possible;
- **reduction** in the number of animals used to the minimum necessary to achieve a robust result; and
- **refinement** of procedures and animal environments to minimise pain or distress.

NAEAC was involved in various work initiatives to promote the 3Rs in 2025, including:

- Awarding biennial cycle of the Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award. This is an award jointly administered and funded by NAEAC and the Australian New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (NZ).
- Updating the NAEAC website to make information relating to the 3Rs more visible.
- Strengthening the CEC template requirements related to the 3Rs.
- Engaging in discussions related to application of 3Rs in RTT during site visits.

NAEAC Awards

AEC Service Award

From time to time, NAEAC rewards AEC members following nomination of their organisation or AEC to recognise an outstanding contribution.

No nominations for service awards were made to NAEAC in 2025.

The Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award

The principles of the 3Rs are a cornerstone of the ethical use of animals in research, testing and teaching (RTT). The Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield 3Rs Award celebrates achievement in the development and/or implementation of the 3Rs.

John Schofield was a veterinarian with significant national and international recognition whose work focused on the welfare of animals used in research and teaching. He contributed extensively to developing new ways to advance the 3Rs, implement them in his work, and support others to do so. This award was created to recognise similar achievements by others in this important area of research, testing, and teaching.

It was pleasing to see the award presented to two co-recipients during the 2024 award cycle, Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe | School of Animal Health and Lee Morris of Equibreed ART Ltd, at a joint NAEAC / ANZCCART-NZ meeting in 2025. Both worthy recipients demonstrated advances in their application of the 3Rs in the use of animals in teaching and in research respectively. The next cycle of the biennial award will begin in 2026, and we look forward to assessing these applications that are so invaluable for ensuring high standards of animal welfare and the ethical use of animals in RTT.

Requests for Advice

During 2025, NAEAC was asked for advice on several occasions by members of AECs, members of the public, and people involved in RTT. The requests covered a wide range of subjects, including:

- questions from AECs wanting to clarify operational matters;
- queries relating to the need for ethical approval;
- questions relating roles on an AEC;
- questions regarding amendments to an approved code of ethical conduct.

NAEAC provides advice where appropriate and may also forward the request to MPI to manage independently if it is outside NAEAC's remit. Where advice is taking the form of a publication or website update, the publications subcommittee will be involved, as well as the MPI secretariat to ensure accuracy and awareness.

Joint Meetings

NAEAC participated in their annual joint meeting ANZCCART NZ (Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and teaching). Agenda items included updates on work programmes, discussion on ComPass Animal Welfare Training, points of difference between NAEAC and ANZCCART NZ, and potential areas for collaboration.

Committee Members' Activity at Conferences/Meetings

During their day to day working lives, NAEAC members frequently attend conferences and meetings outside of their direct committee responsibilities and are able to share their newly gained knowledge with the rest of the committee to inform NAEAC's work. Members are able to apply for financial support to attend but often travel as part of their day jobs and report on items of interest to NAEAC.

Retiring Members

Two committee members retired in 2025:

- Dr Dianne Wepa
- Ms Rachel Heeney

Dianne shared her expertise as Chair of the Mātauranga Māori sub-committee and drove initiatives such as translating the NAEAC Code of Ethical Conduct template into Te Reo Māori.

Rachel was nominated by the Ministry of Education and brought her experience and knowledge as a science teacher and with the use of animals in schools. She made a significant contribution as Chair of the Animals in Teaching sub-committee.

NAEAC expresses its profound gratitude to both and wishes them well as they conclude their service.

Appendix one – NAEAC strategy infographic

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) Strategy

2024-2028



Vision

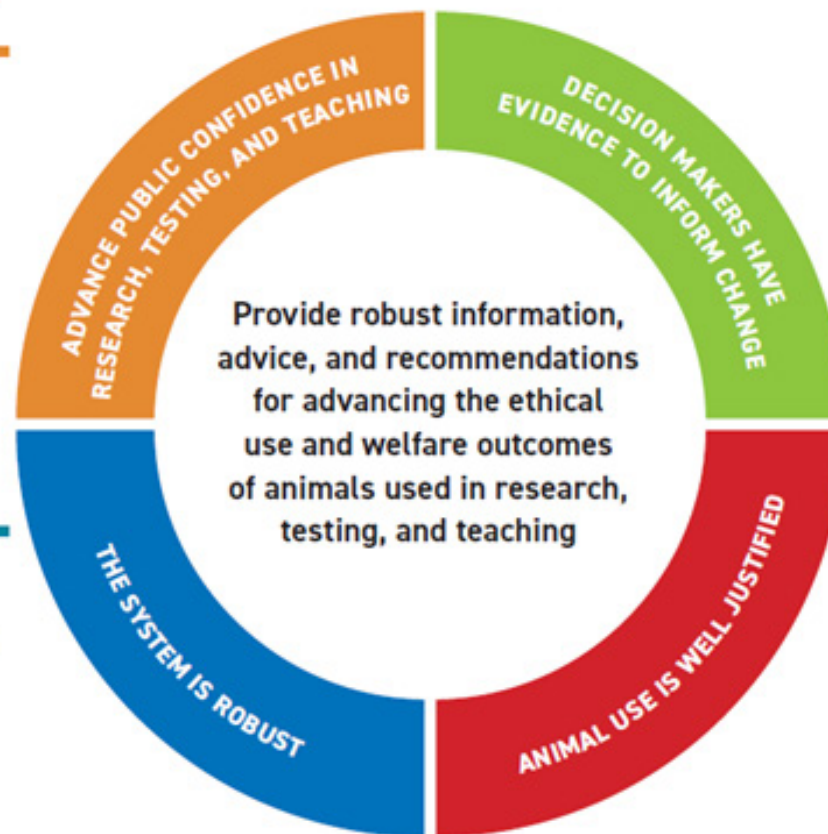
Providing world-class leadership that underpins the ethical use of animals for research, testing and teaching in New Zealand

Effectively engage to improve public awareness and understanding

- Enhance awareness of NAEAC's role in research, testing, and teaching (RTT)
- Remove barriers and improve understanding of the RTT system
- Promote and support transparency initiatives for animal use in RTT
- Ensure NAEAC communications are fit for purpose, responsive, and maintained
- Promote a proactive approach to understanding different public views.

Ensure a responsible research, testing, and teaching system

- Identify and prioritise system improvements within NAEAC's functions
- Ensure effective monitoring of codes of ethical conduct and RTT activities
- Provide best-practice guidance in relation to RTT
- Improved understanding of the application of Te Ao Māori principles in the RTT space.



Evidence-based advice provided to Minister and Director-General of MPI

- Make recommendations to ensure Part 6 of the Animal Welfare Act is fit for purpose
- Recommend specific improvements to the RTT system
- Identify and review critical and significant issues, proactively and when directed by the Minister
- Remain informed of emerging national and international developments and issues.

Animal ethics committees are supported in making robust decisions

- Support efficient code of ethical conduct review process and provide advice to animal ethics committees (AEC)
- Enhance relationships with AECs
- Promote sharing of best practice between AECs including advancing the implementation of the 4Rs.