

NAEAC

The National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee



The NAEAC Newsletter

July 2026

A Note from Nat

Tēnā koutou katoa,

I'd like to start with an apology as I realise it's been some time since our last newsletter. In 2025, our secretariat support team went through some internal changes, so we temporarily paused updates to focus our resources. I am very pleased that we are resuming our regular newsletter, allowing us to reconnect with animal ethics committees (AECs) and the wider research, testing and teaching (RTT) community.

Looking back, 2025 was nonetheless a productive year for NAEAC. A notable piece of work was our advice to the Minister that larval fish should be declared 'animals' under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

Beyond this, supporting the capability of AECs remained 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 also a pleasure to jointly present the 2024 Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield 3Rs Implementation Award alongside ANZCCART. The co-recipients were Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe and Dr Lee Morris of Equibreed ART Ltd.

I wish to acknowledge two committee members who completed their service in 2025: Dr Dianne Wepa and Ms Rachel Heeney. Both made important contributions to NAEAC's work, and we are grateful for their dedication. We warmly welcome Dr Tim Kelly and Dr Jim Webster, who joined the committee in 2025 and are already contributing meaningfully to our work programme.

In 2026, we have set our working theme as 'Robust Decision-Making', with a focus on supporting AECs to build confidence in their processes. I look forward to sharing more about our plans in this issue and to engaging with you this year.

Nga mihi nui,

Professor Natalie Waran OBE

Chairperson, National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee



2025 Quick Review

Advice to the Minister—Larval Fish

One of the most significant pieces of work NAEAC completed in 2025 was providing advice to the Minister on the status of larval fish, including zebrafish, under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. Larval fish are not currently considered 'animals' under the Act and therefore do not receive the protections afforded under Part 6. NAEAC's advice recommended that fish be declared 'animals' at the end of the yolk-sac larval stage, reflecting current scientific understanding of sentience and in line with welfare requirements in other parts of the world.

Wellington Site Visits

NAEAC's annual site visits took place in the Wellington region in 2025. These visits provide an opportunity for NAEAC members to familiarise themselves with ongoing RTT work, understand the experiences of AEC members, and provide code holders and AECs with a forum for discussion with NAEAC. Discussion themes during the 2025 visits included impact grading and consistency across AECs, which directly informed planning for subsequent webinar content. The committee also enjoyed meeting Spike, one of the older residents at Victoria University of Wellington!



AEC 2025 Webinar Series

NAEAC hosted three webinars in 2025 as part of its commitment to supporting AECs. The webinar format continues to receive positive feedback from stakeholders particularly for accessibility. The 2025 series included the following topics.

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

You can find NAEAC webinar resources on the [NAEAC website](#).

John Schofield 3Rs Implementation Award

The 2024 Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield 3Rs Implementation Award was presented jointly with ANZCCART NZ and shared between two outstanding recipients: Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe | School of Animal Health and Dr Lee Morris of Equibreed ART Ltd.

The call for applications for the 2026 award is now open (visit the [NAEAC website](#) for more information).

NAEAC encourages AEC members to promote the award among their colleagues and to consider putting forward nominations that demonstrate commitment to replacing, reducing, or refining the use of animals in RTT.

Other News

Gene Technology Legislation

NAEAC has been following the gene technology bill, following an earlier briefing from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The Select Committee sought feedback in 2025 and reported back to the House recommending a number of changes. After their recommendations are considered the bill will proceed to its second reading in Parliament.

NAEAC Subcommittees

These are our primary mechanism for progressing our operational work programme. Our current active subcommittees are:

- Operation of Part 6 - considering fitness of Part 6 of the Act, including the accredited reviewer framework.
- Good Practice Guide - ongoing review and updates to the GPG.
- Publications – including reviewing the AEC Induction Pack.
- Animals in Teaching - progressing animals in education resource development work with ANZCCART.
- AEC Webinar and Training - planning the 2026 webinar series.
- 3Rs Award – ANZCAART and NAEAC's have formed a working group to manage the 2026 award cycle.

NAEAC and the Openness Agreement

The Openness Agreement on Animal Research and Teaching in New Zealand launched at the ANZCCART 2021 conference sets out five commitments for signatory organisations:

- Be clear about why and how animals are used in research and teaching.
- Enhance communications with the media and the public about animal use.
- Be proactive in sharing information about the use of animals.
- Report on progress on the Three Rs (replacement, reduction, and refinement).
- Acknowledge when things go wrong and explain what has been done to put them right.

There are now more than 30 signatories to the agreement representing universities, research institutes, non-profit organisations, Crown Research Institutes, government bodies, and professional organisations. There is also a new Supporter category for organisations that do not conduct animal research directly but wish to demonstrate their commitment to openness.

NAEAC, as a proponent of the Openness Agreement, recognises that public confidence in the RTT system depends not only on robust regulatory oversight, but on the scientific community actively communicating about ethical animal use. NAEAC encourages any RTT organisation that has not yet signed the Openness Agreement to consider doing so.

Looking Ahead: NAEAC's 2026 Work Programme

NAEAC's agreed working theme for 2026 is 'Robust Decision-Making'. Rather than seeking to introduce substantial change year-to-year, the committee's focus will be on continuous improvement - supporting AECs to build confidence in process and good governance, rather than prescribing fixed or black-and-white outcomes.

2026 Site Visits

NAEAC recently undertook its 2026 site visits following the June general meeting in Dunedin.

The Committee met with the animal care teams located at the University of Otago's Eccles building and zebrafish facilities, before splitting into two groups to visit Invermay Agricultural Centre (Bioeconomy Science Institute) in Mosgiel and the New Zealand Marine Studies Centre (University of Otago) in Portobello.

Across all four visits the Committee met with engaged animal care technicians, outreach staff, and researchers who generously shared about the RTT work their organisations are doing.

AEC Induction Pack

The AEC Induction Pack is due for review in 2026.

If you have feedback on the current pack or suggestions for content that would assist new AEC members, please get in touch via naeac@mpi.govt.nz.

2026 AEC Webinars

Three webinar topics are planned for 2026, reflecting areas of particular relevance to AEC practice:

- Artificial intelligence in the 3Rs and the AEC space
- Updates to the NAEAC Good Practice Guide
- Impact grading and consistency (a scenarios-based, interactive webinar)

Accredited Reviewers Update

Accredited reviewers play a critical role in assessing code holder compliance with the Animal Welfare Act 1999 and with each organisation's code of ethical conduct. NAEAC is aware that there are currently only two accredited reviewers and notes that Dr Ron Thornton has recently been re-appointed.

MPI is working through a process to increase the pool of accredited reviewers. If you'd like more information please contact MPI at animal.welfare@mpi.govt.nz.

Future Newsletters

The committee is pleased to be able to resume publication of our newsletter following its pause in 2025.

We plan to publish focused, timely issues rather than lengthy editions, so that the newsletter is a practical and accessible communication tool for AECs and the wider RTT community.

If you have topics you would like NAEAC to address in future newsletters, or if you have news from your AEC to share, please let us know by contacting us at naeac@mpi.govt.nz.

Upcoming meetings

NAEAC holds 3 ordinary meetings each year.

Remaining meetings for 2026:

- 14 October

Want to attend as an observer?

For details about meeting attendance contact the NAEAC Secretary at naeac@mpi.govt.nz.

Public attendance guidelines can be found here: [NAEAC Public Attendance Guidelines](#)

Want to know more?

Check out the NAEAC website to learn more about the work of the committee and how you can get involved.

www.naeac.org.nz

Need to get in touch?

Send us an email: naeac@mpi.govt.nz

Thank you.

NOTE: The information in this newsletter is intended to provide general information to animal ethics committees. It should not be construed as legal advice and is not intended to take the place of, or represent, the written law of New Zealand or other official guidelines or requirements