

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

2025 AEC Webinar Series

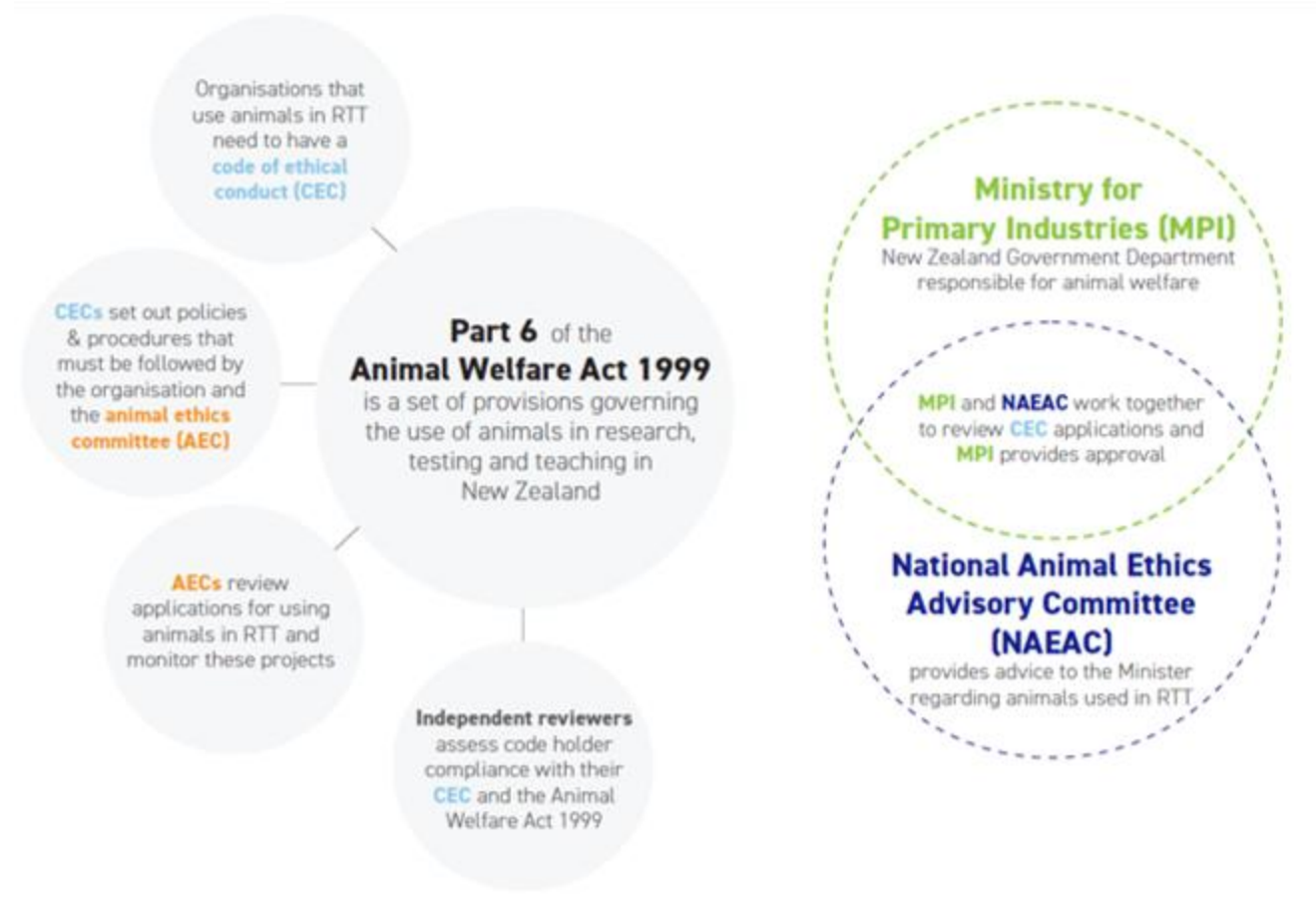
NAEAC

The National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



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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.

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2025 AEC Webinar Series

- Biennial AEC Workshop – interact, stimulate discussion, information exchange
 - Three-part mini webinar series, September – November
 - Presentations are not recorded this year but will be available as powerpoints on the NAEAC webpage
 - All presentations are lunchtime sessions 12pm – 1pm
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1. October 15 - *You have a non-compliance, now what?*
 2. November 5 - *Impact grading and consistency*
 3. November 19 - *Good decision-making for AECs, including consensus*

Disclaimer

- The information shared in these webinars is intended to provide general information to AECs.
- All reasonable measures have been taken to ensure the quality and accuracy of the information available.
- The contents shared should not be construed as legal advice and any guidance included is not intended to take the place of, or to represent, the written law of New Zealand or other official guidelines or requirements.

Presenters

- Laura Bennet
 - Professor, Dept of Physiology, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland
- Mike King
 - Associate Professor and Head of Department, Department of Bioethics, Faculty of Medicine Dunedin, University of Otago



The purpose of an animal ethics committee

Is set out in legislation under section 99 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

- To make decisions about whether the proposed or continuing use of animals is justified
- Fundamentals of decision-making (Section 100)
- Use appropriate legislation and policies (e.g. CEC) - and consider all relevant matters.
- Applicants must provide evidence that:
 - ✓ Experiments cannot be done without using animals – 3Rs assessment
 - ✓ The use of animals is justified alongside processes that ensure welfare protections
 - ✓ The project objectives can be met alongside animal welfare protections

Committee membership (Section 101)

Four statutory members

- Code holder/senior staff member capable of evaluating the scientific value of applications.
- A member nominated by an approved organisation (i.e., RNZSPCA).
- A veterinarian nominated by the NZVA.
- A lay person nominated by a Territorial Authority or Regional Council .
- Full members who contribute expertise to the committee and participate in decision making.

Additional members

- Provide advice but may/may not participate in decision-making.

Committee membership

- The mix of external and internal members brings diversity of experience, questions and opinions and reduces judgement bias and selective focus.
- Selecting members is a considered process
 - Experience, skill, knowledge for the scope of applications seen by a particular committee.
 - Can provide objective – balanced reviewing.
 - Can understand and reflect upon diversity of opinion in their decision making.
- Training, consistency of committee processes, and good chairing all act to support a positive decision-making environment.

AEC member training

- Committee member roles, expectations and obligations.
- The animal ethics review process; what to review and how.
- Guiding legislation and policies.
- Administrative decision-making processes for consistent decisions making.
- Guiding principles for ethics and welfare and consensus decision making.
- Resources on the basics of how to assess the scientific information,
 - PREPARE and ARRIVE guidelines
 - Other educational resources (e.g. NAEAC Good Practice Guide, ANZCCART website resources, NC3Rs)

Training for applicants

- Institution based requirements (e.g., new PI training, legislation training, animal handling etc.)
- Applicants should have similar resources as AEC members
- Broader outreach to educate and make AEC processes transparent - seminars, webinars
 - What is animal ethics about vs. a grant application
 - How do AECs make their decisions and why do they ask the questions they do
 - Reminding applicants about the make-up of the committee
 - Role of the applicant in making their applications clear and concise for all AEC members to understand
- To receive clear and concise applications we need information (e.g. online resources and advice, to be easily found and easily understood)

Decision making at committee meetings

- The chair is key to ensuring correct legislative and structured administrative processes that facilitate decisions that are consistent, transparent and procedurally fair.
- All members of committee play a role in ensuring these processes.
- To ensure these processes the roles and experience/expertise of individual members should be known to all AEC members.

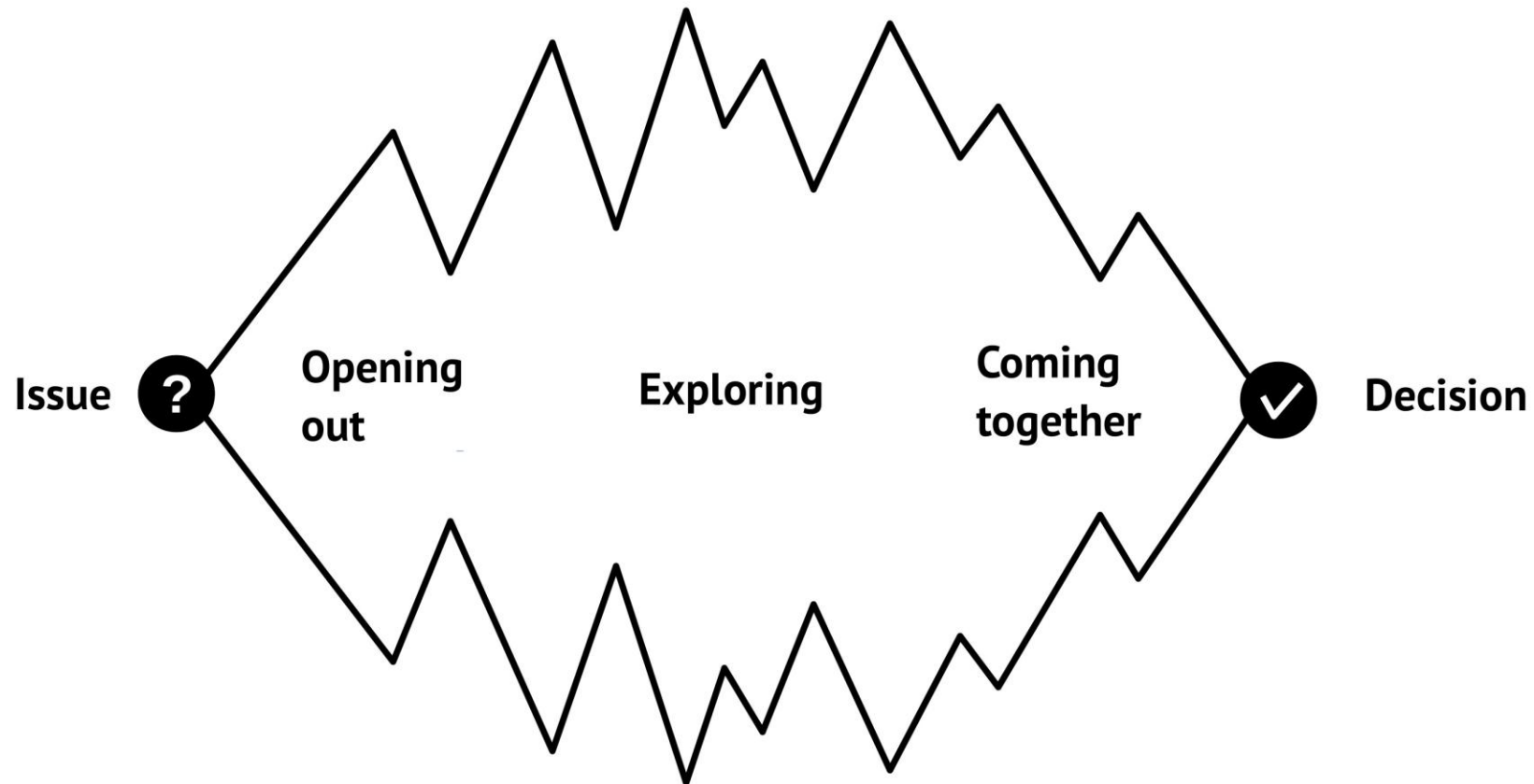
Decision making at committee meetings

- Presentation of the application may be done by a lead reviewer.
- Was the required and sufficient information provided?
- If the use of animals is required:
 - Is the science valid and evidence based?
Clear aims, objectives, methods, species justification, statistics etc.
 - What is the welfare impact and how is this managed/minimized?
 - What experience does the team have, what training/oversight is needed?
- Identification of areas not addressed well or are unclear.
- Other committee comments to add to the lead reviewers points

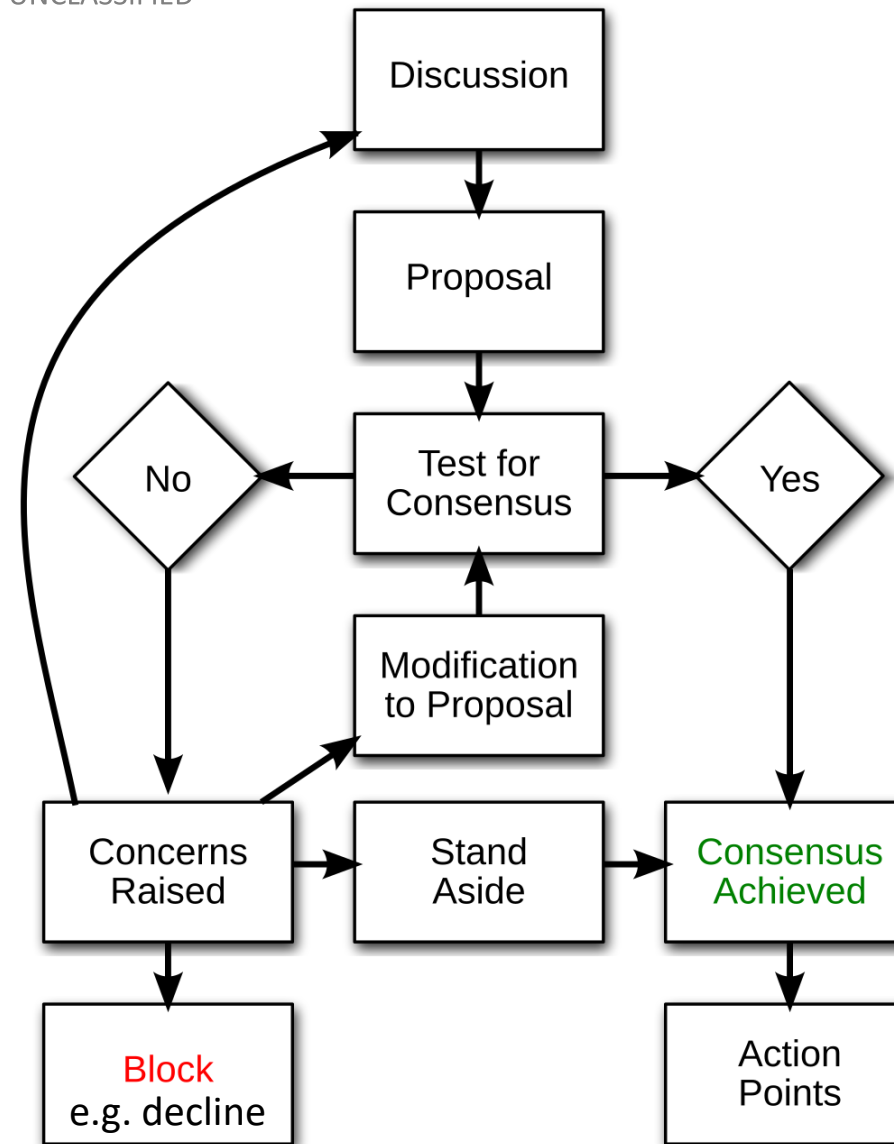
Decision making at committee meetings

- General discussion by the committee of the points raised.
 - Ensuring all voices are heard.
 - Identifying areas where greater discussion is needed to identify questions for the applicant.
 - That there is consistency in decision making.
 - Identifying areas where practices may need to change – for sub-committee assessment.
 - Any other factors to consider.
- **How do we reach consensus?**

Consensus



Consensus



Adapted from: [Open Group Standards Guide](#)

Consensus

Good Practice Guide

for the use of animals in research,
testing and teaching

4.4.8. Decision-Making

March 2024

NAEAC strongly recommends that decisions are made by consensus, with applications revised until all members are satisfied. If consensus cannot be reached NAEAC recommends the default should be to reject the application.

Consensus and consistency

- Legislation, policy and forms help AECs “treat like cases alike”, procedural consistency that supports more consistent outcomes
- But AECs are diverse and must judge criterial relevance, weigh values and assess complex, interacting factors, under open-ended criteria such as “any other matters that the committee considers relevant” AWA s. 100(1)(m)
- This can improve the identification and scrutiny of ethical reasons, but divergent outcomes may still occur even when procedures are uniform
- Consensus functions here as a demanding, fair decision rule:
 - Surfaces and tests all relevant concerns, moderates positions through dialogue
 - Addresses concerns by requiring more information, approval conditions, or revisions
 - Sets a high threshold for approval (a single sustained objection)



What can we do to improve decision-making?

- Revise or create guidance on how to carry out harm- benefit analysis and scientific validity/credibility assessments
- Strengthen links to resources, skills and ideas for replacement, refinement and reduction
- Improve AEC and applicant training and resources – easy to find and more digestible flow diagrams, webinars, etc.
- Ensure clarity and transparency and consistency of processes for applicants and in our reporting to applicants
 - Yearly short “case calibration” sessions (e.g. grading impact, harms/benefits, on past or hypothetical protocols) to align judgments
 - Note and track decision rationales (key ethical reasons, 3Rs issues, sticking points) to support
- Other voices – Mātauranga Māori, student perspective

Questions and Discussion – How does this look in your AEC?

- *In your AEC, what does “consensus” look like in practice? How do you handle situations where one member has a sustained objection?*
- *What, if anything, do you already do to check or improve consistency of outcomes across meetings or subcommittees? What has helped (or not helped)?*
- *What helps every AEC member contribute fully at your meetings (considering differing learning and communication styles) – and what gets in the way?*
- *What further training or resources (for AEC members or applicants) would most help your committee make better, more consistent decisions? (e.g. harm–benefit, impact grading, scientific validity, Te Tiriti / Mātauranga Māori, etc.)*



Want to know more?

Email naeac@mpi.org.nz

Check out www.naeac.org.nz

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