

Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



ANIMAL WELFARE

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

Annual Report

1 January to 31 December 2023

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

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August 2025

NAEAC

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee

Chairperson's Comment

Tēnā koutou katoa

It is my pleasure to present the 2024 Annual Report for the National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC). This year has marked significant progress in our ongoing commitment to upholding the highest standards of animal welfare in research, testing, and teaching across New Zealand.

A cornerstone of our activities this year has been the implementation of our new 2024-2028 Strategic Plan, developed and approved in late 2023. This plan establishes a clear framework with the overarching aim to advance ethical use and improved animal welfare outcomes in research, testing, and teaching (RTT) by providing clear, high-quality, and robust advice to the Minister, other high-level authorities, and animal ethics committees.

In pursuit of our educational mandate, NAEAC introduced a new webinar series replacing our traditional biennial workshop format. This new approach significantly improved accessibility and engagement, with three focused sessions covering vital topics: the 3Rs principles, animal ethics committee (AEC) responsibilities regarding non-compliance, and practical applications of our Good Practice Guide. Feedback from stakeholders was overwhelmingly positive, confirming the value of this new format.

The promotion of the 3Rs principles (replacement, reduction, and refinement) was a central theme for our work in 2024. Our annual code holder visits in the Christchurch region provided valuable insights into the use of the 3Rs in teaching methodologies and diverse research applications. We are grateful to those who welcomed us for sharing their thoughts and best practice. These visits, alongside NAEAC members' attendance at five AEC meetings nationwide, strengthened our understanding of the operation of Codes of Ethical Conduct within the sector and the various ways that AECs work together



to ensure robust decision making. We also proudly awarded the Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield Three Rs Implementation Award jointly to Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe and Equibreed ART Ltd for their exemplary projects advancing animal welfare in educational settings and reproductive research respectively.

A major achievement this year was the comprehensive revision of our Good Practice Guide, restructuring and enhancing this critical resource with current best practices and clearer guidance. Our ongoing recommendation to the Minister regarding the status of larval fish within the Act represents our commitment to recognizing sentience in all animals used in RTT. In addition, work towards a bilingual Code of Ethical Conduct application template and support for the ANZCCART Openness Agreement initiatives demonstrate our ongoing commitment to inclusivity and transparency in animal RTT.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank all NAEAC members for their dedicated work on our various subcommittees and their valued contributions throughout 2024. Their combined expertise and commitment helps ensure New Zealand maintains its world-class standards for the ethical use of animals for research, testing, and teaching.

Professor Nat Waran
Chairperson, NAEAC

Membership

Committee Members	Expiry of Appointment
Professor Natalie K Waran BSc (Hons), PhD Director – Good Life For Animals Centre, Companion Animals New Zealand (Independent Chairperson)	31.10.24 ¹
Dr Jacquie L Harper BSc (Hons), PhD General Manager – Research and Innovation, Bragato Research Institute (Elected Deputy Chairperson 2023)	31.10.25
Dr Angenita (Nita) B Harding BVSc, MBA (Dist) Veterinarian	31.10.25
Ms Rachel A Heeney BSc, Dip Tchg Head of Biology – Epsom Girls Grammar School (Nominated by the Ministry of Education)	31.10.24 ¹
Dr Michael R King B Appl Sc (Hons), PhD Senior Lecturer – Bioethics Centre, University of Otago (Nominated by the Health Research Council of New Zealand)	31.10.25
Dr Dianne T H Wepa RSW, PhD Senior Lecturer, Adjunct – Auckland University of Technology	31.10.24
Professor Laura Bennet MA, PhD Professor of Physiology – Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, The University of Auckland	31.10.24 ¹
Dr Janine A Duckworth BAg Sc (Hons), PhD Scientist – Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research New Zealand Ltd	31.10.24 ¹
Dr Joanne Holter BVSc, PDip (Business) Technical Market Development Manager New Zealand – MSD Animal Health (Nominated by Agcarm Inc)	31.10.25
Dr Jessica Walker BSc, MSc, PDip (Higher Education), PhD National Science Manager – Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RNZSPCA) (Nominated by the RNZSPCA)	31.10.25

¹ Members whose appointments expired in 2024 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 2024 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	\$59,060.00
Total reimbursed travelling expenses	\$1,927.70
TOTAL FOR 2024	\$60,987.70

MEMBER	GROSS FEES PAID IN 2024
Natalie Waran	\$15,125.00
Jacquie Harper	\$7,212.00
Nita Harding	\$7,206.27
Rachel Heeney	\$7,880.30
Michael King	\$4,080.00
Dianne Wepa	\$2,200.00
Laura Bennet	\$2,400.00
Janine Duckworth	\$5,224.60
Joanne Holter	\$3,764.42
Jessica Walker	\$5,625.38
TOTAL	\$59,060.00

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

Statutory Activities

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

This section of the Annual Report addresses NAEAC's work in 2024 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

NAEAC did not provide any advice to the Minister in relation to animal welfare issues arising from research, testing, and teaching during 2024.

In late 2024, NAEAC was invited to provide advice to the Minister on larval fish, including zebrafish. The scope is 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. This work is expected to be completed in 2025.

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

No recommendations were made to the Minister under section 3(3) of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 during 2024.

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

One recommendation was made to the minister under section 85 of the Animal Welfare Act 1999 during 2024. This was in relation to a proposed research project and the final decision was delegated to MPI.

Provision of Advice and Information on the Development and Review of Codes of Ethical Conduct

NAEAC reviewed seven codes of ethical conduct during 2024:

- Department of Conservation
- National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Ltd
- Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology
- University of Waikato
- Waikato Institute of Technology
- New Zealand Association of Science Educators
- EthicoNZ Ltd

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 all seven codes being approved under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

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

Two NAEAC newsletters were published in 2024 and are found on the NAEAC website. The newsletters contain a Chair's update, a profile of a member of NAEAC or an AEC, excerpts from meeting minutes, and articles and information of interest to AECs.

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 as outlined below:

1. AECs and the 3Rs
2. Responsibilities of AECs in relation to non-compliance
3. The Good Practice Guide – the what, the how, and the why

Feedback from stakeholders on this mechanism of engagement was very positive, with webinar accessibility being a key factor driving increased attendance.

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 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 challenges and experiences of AEC members to inform future workshops and AEC Chairs' meetings;
- Provide an opportunity to discuss various aspects of welfare, research, or teaching strategy;
- 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.

In 2024, code holders in the Christchurch area opened their doors to NAEAC, and very informative visits were hosted. NAEAC were particularly interested in the discussions that took place regarding the use of animals for teaching purposes, and were impressed by the diversity of research that was presented and how it aligned with the 3Rs principles.

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, the committee encourages its members to attend AEC meetings. NAEAC members attend/visit strictly on an 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.

During 2024 NAEAC members visited the following AECs:

- Department of Conservation
- Invetus (NZ) Ltd
- Landcare Research New Zealand Ltd
- Lincoln University
- Eastern Institute of Technology (EIT)

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

NAEAC made one recommendation for an accredited reviewer to be appointed and one recommendation for reappointment in 2024. Additionally, the committee received notification of one resignation.

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 draft code 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 2024.

Other Activities

Subcommittees

Operation of Part 6

The code of ethical conduct (CEC) template was revised in 2023. It was then provided to organisations renewing their CEC and also organisations wishing to become code holders in 2024. The use of the new template made both the preparation of CECs and the review of CECs by NAEAC a more efficient process.

Ensuring AECs better understand their responsibilities and obligations with regard to compliance with animal welfare legislation and managing the approval and monitoring of RTT work has been the other focus for this subcommittee in 2024. An article for the NAEAC newsletter was prepared on non-compliances and a webinar on the same topic was delivered as part of the NAEAC AEC webinar series. Identifying and assessing non-compliances, as well as expectations for the management and follow-up of non-compliances, was covered in the information provided. A recording of the webinar is available on the NAEAC website.

The 4th R

The 4th R is respect for animals, including respectful treatment of animals and their tissue after death. The subcommittee focused on implementation of the 4th R by code holders during their review of new and revised Codes of Ethical Conduct. This allows a 'ground-up' approach to interpretation and implementation guided by NAEAC.

Publications

NAEAC completed a comprehensive revision of the Good Practice Guide for the use of Animals in Research, Testing, and Teaching (the GPG). The GPG plays a vital role in ensuring a responsible and ethical system by consolidating NAEAC's views and positions and clearly outlining legislative requirements alongside recommendations for best practice for codeholders and AECs. The revision reorganised the content to provide a more concise and improved structure. It also introduced new guidance on several critical aspects of animal use and oversight.

To promote the revised GPG, the publications subcommittee hosted a webinar in November 2024 for AEC members, outlining its purpose, key updates in the 2024 edition, and addressing questions. This engagement also sought feedback for potential further enhancements to the GPG. In parallel with this work, NAEAC is reviewing its other publications to ensure their relevance.

One topical update to the GPG was on larval fish. Larval fish are not currently recognised as animals under the Act. However, NAEAC considers that there is sufficient evidence that larval fish are sentient after absorption of the larval yolk-sac. NAEAC therefore recommends that larval fish should be treated as animals when used in research, testing, and teaching for the purposes of the Act at the end of the yolk-sac larval stage. The GPG now includes reference to this position by NAEAC in the 2024 update. As referenced in statutory activities, NAEAC is preparing advice to the Minister on this topic.

Mātauranga Māori

NAEAC's Mātauranga Māori subcommittee used translation services to create a CEC application pack with bilingual (English/ te reo) headers.

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 continues to encourage code of ethical conduct holders to participate in 2024.

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 2024, including:
- Running the 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).
- Engaging with MPI to support the MPI-led initiative on capturing 3Rs related data in the animal use statistics reported annually by MPI.
- Leading a focused discussion session on AECs and the 3Rs at the NAEAC AEC Webinar Session on 4 September 2024.
- Updating the NAEAC website to make information relating to the 3Rs more visible.

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 2024.

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.

Otago Polytechnic's Te Kura Oraka Kararehe | School of Animal Health and Lee Morris of Equibreed ART Ltd are co-recipients of the 2024 Aotearoa New Zealand John Schofield 3Rs Award, jointly presented by NAEAC and the New Zealand Board of the Australian & New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART (NZ)).

Otago Polytechnic's project addresses the critical challenge of ensuring veterinary nursing and allied animal healthcare learners graduate with the necessary competencies while maintaining high standards of animal ethics. Their primary focus is to balance teaching safe, ethical, and effective handling and procedural skills, and recognising and mitigating animal stress, with ethical objectives and obligations.

Equibreed ART Ltd's project focuses on understanding, diagnosing, and reducing early embryonic death in horses. To date they have developed an in vitro model using tissue from mares that were euthanized for other reasons. This project will effectively reduce the number of live animals needed for this type of research.

Requests for Advice

During 2024, 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 a joint meeting with the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) in August 2024. This meeting was attended by the Minister as well as MPI leadership, and both NAEAC and NAWAC appreciated having the opportunity to discuss key topics with them. The discussion focussed on NAWAC's letter of expectation and a positive discussion and reflection on how both committees might consider practicality and economics when undertaking their functions.

NAEAC also held a joint meeting with ANZCCART NZ as part of the ANZCCART NZ conference in September. Some NAEAC members were in attendance for the conference and it was valuable to meet the ANZCCART NZ board face to face, while others joined the discussion virtually. The discussion focussed on areas of work each party was contributing to and identifying potential areas of 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. 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.

Conferences attended by committee members in 2024 included:

- L Bennet attended a conference in Scotland looking at how animal research is translated to clinical practice.
- NAEAC members J Walker, M King, R Heeney, J.Duckworth and N Waran attended the ANZCARRT NZ conference held in Christchurch. N Waran and R Heeney both presented at the conference, focussing on their experiences with animals used for teaching.

Retiring Members

No committee members retired in 2024

Appendix one – NAEAC strategy infographic

National Animal Ethics Advisory Committee (NAEAC) Strategy 2024-2028



Vision

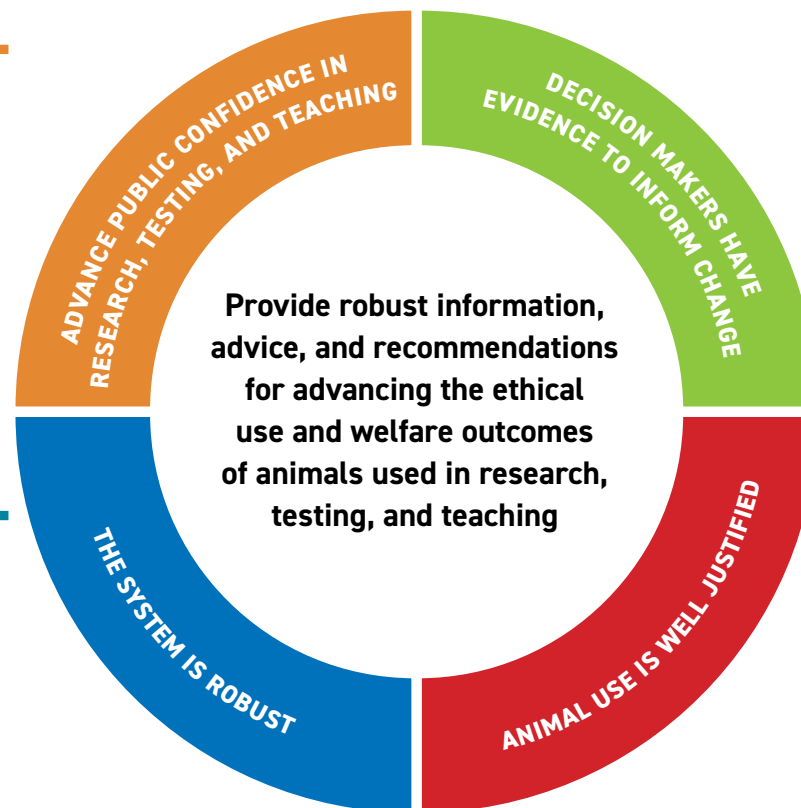
Providing world-class leadership that underpins the ethical use of animals for research, testing and teaching in New Zealand

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.