



An Coiste Náisiúnta um Chaomhnú Ainmhithe  
a Úsáidtear ar Mhaithe le hEolaíocht

National Committee for the Protection of  
Animals Used for Scientific Purposes

# Introduction to Animal Welfare Bodies

By the National Committee for the  
Protection of Animals Used for  
Scientific Purposes

## What are Animal Welfare Bodies

In legislation governing animals used for scientific or training purposes, the welfare of animals takes top priority. To meet this requirement, every establishment must have an Animal Welfare Body (AWB). By law, an AWB must consist of at least the establishment's care and welfare officer and a scientific member. In many cases, the AWB will also include individuals with expertise in:

- The 3Rs (Reduction, Replacement, Refinement).
- Animal husbandry, care and health, and welfare assessment.
- Performing procedures on animals.
- Scientific disciplines relevant to the establishment's research.

Additionally, the Designated Veterinarian (DV) has a legal duty to provide input and expert advice to the AWB.

The composition of the AWB is defined in EU Directive 2010/63/EC. More details about AWB membership and functions can be found in the [European Commission's Guidance on Animal Welfare Bodies and National Committees](#). It is crucial for all AWB members to actively participate and feel comfortable expressing their opinions to represent the perspectives of all stakeholders.

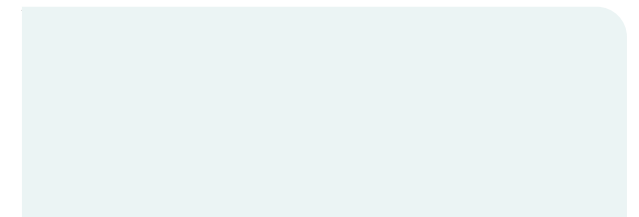
## Responsibilities of the AWB

The tasks undertaken by the AWB are specified in the Directive. The AWB should establish clear terms of reference to facilitate these tasks. It should work with senior management to ensure proper structures and processes are in place to fulfil its legal responsibilities and promote a strong Culture of Care among scientists and staff.

The AWB's main role is to provide internal oversight and guidance regarding the application of the 3Rs. Some additional functions include:

- Advising scientists and staff on animal welfare-related matters.
- Establishing internal processes for monitoring and reporting on animal welfare.
- Ensuring best practices to protect and enhance animal welfare.
- Monitoring project development and identifying 3R opportunities.
- Facilitating organ and tissue sharing from euthanised animals.
- Advising on rehoming of animals when necessary.
- Providing the HPRA with records of advice and decisions upon request.

## Contacting your AWB



## Promoting a Culture of Care

Everyone involved in caring for or using animals should demonstrate a caring and respectful attitude towards them. The AWB plays a pivotal role in fostering a robust Culture of Care within the establishment. It should lead by example by creating a Culture of Care mission statement and effectively implementing agreed policies.

## Key considerations for fostering a Culture of Care

- **Attitude:** Recognise that animals are sentient beings, and individuals working with them must take responsibility for their welfare. Actively explore 3Rs opportunities and resolve animal welfare issues.
- **Establishment support:** Ensure facilities and systems are in place for optimal animal welfare, and AWB members should be familiar with animal units' functioning.
- **Shared responsibility:** All individuals, especially those in managerial positions, should support those working with animals in their responsibilities for animal welfare.
- **Proactive approach:** Encourage a culture of continuous improvement and create a repository of 3Rs information for reference.
- **Compliance:** Emphasise compliance with legislation to all staff and researchers.
- **Empowerment:** Support professional development opportunities for staff involved in animal care.

- **Communication:** Encourage open communication and provide opportunities for all stakeholders to contribute to AWB meetings.
- **Monitoring:** The AWB should advise on matters relating to the welfare and use of animals and follow the development of projects, ensuring that information flows between all relevant parties. Outcomes of projects must be reported to the AWB so that lessons learned following project completion can be applied for future projects.

## Recommended reading and further guidance

Here are some resources for AWB members:

- [‘Caring for Animals aiming for better science - Animal Welfare Bodies and National Committees’ issued by European Commission](#)
- [Guiding principles on good practice for Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies](#)
- [EFPIA/RSPCA webinar on Animal Welfare Body – A catalyst for progress](#)
- [EFPIA Framework document – Assessing and benchmarking ‘Culture of Care’](#)
- [NC3Rs Culture of Care resource library](#)
- [NC3Rs webinar and video – Culture of Care: Creating the right environment for animal care](#)

## National Committee for the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific Purposes

This Committee, appointed by the Minister for Health, serves as a statutory body. Its functions include advising the HPRA and institutional AWBs on various matters related to the use of animals for scientific or educational purposes. It also promotes best practices within Ireland and collaborates with other national committees in the European Union. The National Committee welcomes enquiries from AWBs ([ncsap@hpra.ie](mailto:ncsap@hpra.ie)). More information can be found on the HPRA website ([www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie)).

The National Committee is not a committee of the HPRA but is an independent committee whose work is supported by the HPRA. The National Committee reports directly to the Minister for Health.

## Supported by the Health Products Regulatory Authority

The HPRA oversees the regulation of animals used for scientific or educational purposes. The HPRA has funded the production of this leaflet to emphasise the crucial role of **Animal Welfare Bodies** in creating and nurturing a **culture of care** and highlighting the role of the **National Committee** in this area.