

# Identifying the use/role of Animal Welfare Officers

**Ross Matthews**

Director, Department of Animal Care

Animal Welfare Officer

Executive Officer, WSLHD AEC

Category A, WSLHD AEC

**Research & Education Network**



**Health**  
Western Sydney  
Local Health District

# WSLHD Department of Animal Care

## ● Overview

- Director of the Department of Animal Care - Responsibilities
- Westmead Animal Facilities
- Research and Teaching
- Animal Welfare Officer Role
- Examples - Interactions
- Challenges



# WSLHD Department of Animal Care

- **Staff:**

- Director
- Administrative Officer/Ethics Secretary
- 2 Facility Supervisors
- 7 Animal Technicians

- **Animal Facilities:**

- Westmead Vivarium (large animals)
- Westmead Research Holding (small animals)
- Insectaries – Bed Bugs, Mosquitoes, Flies, Snails, Moth/Larvae



# WSLHD Department of Animal Care Animal Facilities

- **Vivarium**

- Sheep, pigs, rabbits, non-human primates (capacity for poultry and aquaria)
- Paddocks, internal pens and intensive care housing
- 4 LA operating theatres (1 PC2)
- Cardiology Catheter Lab.

- **Research Holding**

- GM mouse and rat breeding and experimental animals
- 4 Laboratories/surgeries (3 PC2), 2 conventional laboratories/surgeries
- 2 insectaries
- 1 DAFF Quarantine Approved Rodent Holding Room



# WSLHD Department of Animal Care

## Sheep paddocks



# Research and Teaching at WSLHD

- **Research at WSLHD include:**

- Cardiac – Atrial Flutter/Fibrillation identification and treatment, ventricular arrhythmias
- Renal - chronic renal disease, polycystic renal disease
- Transplant/Diabetes – whole organ and islet cell transplantation
- Orthopaedic - drug facilitated enhanced fracture repair
- Leukaemic – ALL
- Hepatic – non alcoholic/alcoholic steatohepatitis, liver carcinoma
- Dental – orthodontic , periodontal disease
- Gastrointestinal

- **Training/Education Courses for Clinicians/Surgeons at WSLHD**

- Emergency management of severe trauma
- Emergency anaesthetic intervention (CICO)
- Minimally invasive paediatric laparoscopic surgery



# Animal Welfare Officer

- Animal Care – reliance on the AT's - frontline in monitoring and reporting animal welfare
- Investigation and assessment - researchers (and AT's) must report any debilitated animal/s
- Inform and advice AEC on all animal care/health issues
- Guidance/advice to and “supervision” of researchers
- Promote Animal Welfare and ensure it must not take second place to desired research outcomes



## AWO Interaction /Responsibility to AEC

- Advise on the ethical use of animals - can the impact justify the benefit
- Pain management, infection control, housing, husbandry, procedures, therapies, drug dosages and welfare
- Issues affecting the animal holding facilities that may impact on animal health and wellbeing
- Adverse event reporting
- Implement AEC decisions and ensure responsible animal use is being practiced by researchers
- Breeding and animal usage statistics, annual reporting





## AEC Requirements – Facility Access for Researchers

- The AEC requires all new research personnel to attend the Sydney University “Introduction to Animal Research Course”
- Principal Investigators (or their experienced senior researchers) responsible for new research staff competency
- Animal facility orientation highlighting department policies and procedures is given to all new research staff
- Access to the animal facilities will only be given after confirmation of competency by the PI
- Restricted access



## AWO – Researcher Training /Assistance

- Assistance with AEC applications
- Advice and assistance in compliance with the Code and the Research Act
- Technical advice
- Animal handling
- Anaesthetics
- Medical, surgical and aseptic techniques
- Humane killing (euthanasia)
- Veterinary consultation and guidance



Cardiac Cath.  
Laboratory



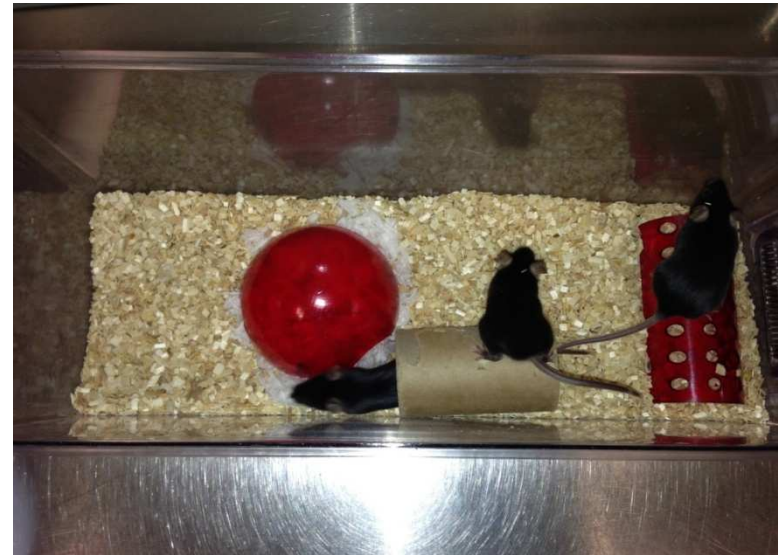
## Polices/Guidelines reference material

- **Animal Research Act 1985 / Regulation 2010 (September 2010)**
- **Australian Code for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. 2013**
- ARRPP Guideline 23 - for the housing of sheep in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Guideline 22 - for the housing of mice in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Guideline 21 - for the care and housing of guinea pigs in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Guideline 18 - for the care and housing of rabbits in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Guideline 20 - for the care and housing of rats in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Guideline 14 - for the care and housing of dogs in scientific institutions
- ARRPP Policy on Collaborative Research
- NHMRC Guidelines on the Care of Cats Used for Scientific Purposes (2009)
- NHMRC Guidelines on the Care of Dogs Used for Scientific Purposes (2009)
- NHMRC Guidelines on the Use of Animals for Training Interventional Medical Practitioners and Demonstrating New Medical Equipment and Techniques (2009)
- Guidelines to promote the wellbeing of animals used for scientific purposes (2008)
- **NHMRC Guidelines for the generation, breeding, care and use of genetically modified and cloned animals for scientific purposes 2006**
- NHMRC Policy on the care of non-human primates for scientific purposes (2003)
- NHMRC Guidelines on Monoclonal antibody production (2001)
- **NSW DPI Animal Ethics Infolink - [www.animaethics.org.au](http://www.animaethics.org.au)**



## Examples of Animal Welfare Interactions

- **Consistent and Effective Monitoring** – infrequent or failure of researchers to adequately monitor animals to assess progress following dietary, drug treatments, tumour induction and surgical procedures → **Training/Education**
- **Animal production** – control of breeding to ensure researchers plan appropriately and only breed sufficient numbers of animals to maintain lines and meet experimental requirements (Reduction) → **Advise/Manage?**



## Examples of Animal Welfare Interactions

- **Genotyping** – at weaning to enable prompt culling of unsuitable animals to minimise stock held and delay the inevitable → **Management**
- **Consultation** on progress of animal studies – assess clinically – recommend appropriate action
- **IVC systems** – how many animals can be held in a box and how often should they be changed? Our policy → weekly  
Box odour (6-7 days) → not pleasant → **Management**



IVC Mouse Rack (AirLaw)



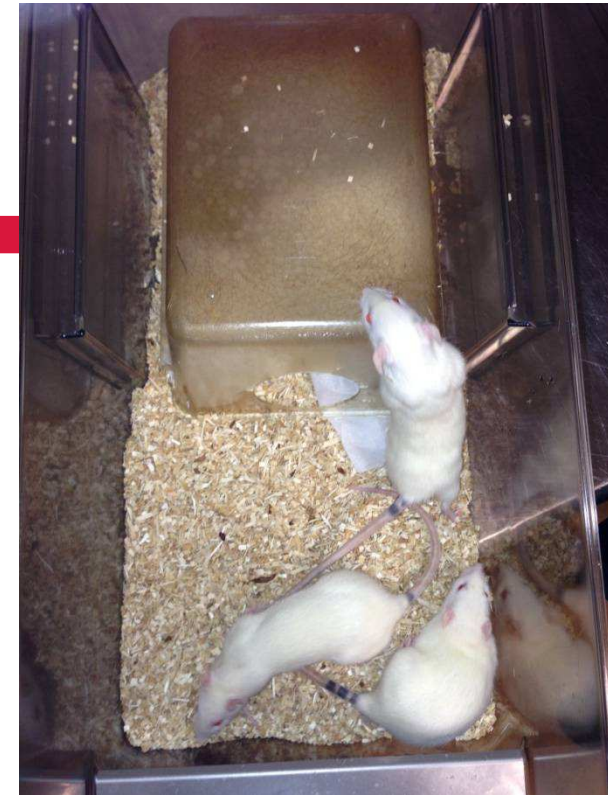
## Examples of Animal Welfare – Housing/Enrichment

- **Sheep and Pig accommodation** – the benefit of possessing paddocks to allow sheep to graze pre and post procedure and enclosures for pigs which provide an external exercise area, preferable to being internally housed in pens for the duration of the experimental period → **Enrichment**
- **Rabbit Housing** – large floor pens, sawdust and straw bedding, elevated platform, close proximity to neighbour, hutch hideaway, dietary supplementation → **Enrichment**



## Challenges

- **Conflict of Interest** – perceived/inferred potential to “overlook/cover up” untoward events/animal welfare breaches to protect the institution and the department (self preservation)!!!
- **Engendering total commitment by all participants for the welfare of all animals** within the WSLHD facilities - must be **paramount and transparent**
- **Animal Welfare** requires ongoing observation and monitoring of research activities with essential input and support of the **Animal Technicians**.
- **Effective Communication** – direct, email updates to inform/remind researchers of their responsibilities (incl. application of the 3R's)
- **Ongoing Vigilance** to ensure **Animal Welfare** is the foremost consideration at all levels for the ethical use of animals in the research and education process.



## Animal Welfare - Summary

- Primary responsibility of **all** DAC staff (with full support of the AEC) is to ensure the **care, health and welfare** of all animals at WSLHD
- Researchers are constantly reminded that Animal Research is not a right, it's a privilege that cannot be taken for granted and must never be abused – approval can be revoked



*Thank You*

