

National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board

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August 20, 2015

Catherine Woteki, PhD
REE Under Secretary
Chief Scientist
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Jamie L. Whitten Building, Room 214-W
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Dr. Woteki:

This letter provides additional advice and recommendations in response to the Phase II report and findings from the Agricultural Research Service – Animal Handling and Welfare Review Panel (ARS-AHWR). The National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics (NAREEE) Advisory Board appreciates the opportunity to provide this additional advice.

The NAREEE Advisory Board held a public meeting via teleconference on August 11, 2015, with the members of the ARS-AHWR Panel and staff of the Research, Extension, and Education mission area to discuss the report and findings from the Panel's review of the animal care and well-being at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). The Board heard an overview of the charge to the panel and a summary of the findings and recommendations. In addition, the Board heard verbal comments. Written comments were submitted via email.

The NAREEE Advisory Board commends the ARS-AHWR Panel for a thorough, professional, and comprehensive review of the animal handling and care at ARS locations with animal research. Their resulting report provided a clear understanding that animals are not being mistreated at ARS research facilities. The Panel appropriately identified measures that must be implemented in order to ensure policies and procedures are appropriately followed and they

identified several best practices to improve and refine the animal care and use programs and policies at ARS.

As a result of the discussion on August 11, 2015, the NAREEE Advisory Board identifies the following recommendations to USDA:

In their report, the Panel recognized that the primary function of the IACUC is to act as an agent for the welfare and wellbeing of animals used in research. **The NAREEE Advisory Board recommends and supports the continued use of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) as the best tool to ensure the proper care of animals used in agricultural research.** Therefore, the USDA and ARS should continue to work to implement the recommendations in the Panel's report to refine and improve the function of the IACUCs across all facilities.

In order to support the continued success of the IACUCs across all ARS locations with research animals, **ARS should ensure that employees are fully aware that IACUC responsibilities are a major and important part of their job responsibilities.** This can be accomplished through position descriptions, evaluations, training and the reward system.

The NAREEE Advisory Board identified several areas in the Panel's report where conflict of interest rules were not being appropriately followed. Subsequently, the report recommends the need to provide expanded training opportunities within and outside of ARS on the role and function of an IACUC. **NAREEE recommends that this training include explicit information on conflict of interest rules to ensure that the IACUCs are properly constituted and functioning as intended.**

Lastly, the NAREEE Advisory Board commends USDA and ARS for the efforts to date on implementing the recommendations identified in the Phase I report from the AHWR and the additional recommendations identified by the Board. Improvements in the animal care and use programs at ARS are already visible. **The NAREEE Advisory Board recommends that USDA continues to ensure that all of the recommendations are appropriately implemented and are properly maintained going forward, including providing additional economic resources for the upkeep of facilities.**

NAREEE Recommendations on the AHWR Panel Report

The public comments received both verbally and in writing were considered in the development of these recommendations.

On behalf of the entire NAREEE Advisory Board, I hope you find these recommendations both useful and informative. If we can be of additional assistance on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Milo F. Shult".

Dr. Milo Shult
Chair, NAREEE Advisory Board

cc: The Honorable Thomas Vilsack, Secretary, USDA
Chavonda Jacobs-Young, Administrator, Agricultural Research Service