

The Culture of Care - a working concept

The text below setting out essential factors for a good Culture of Care is summarised from:

- the *European Commission National Competent Authorities for the implementation of Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes: A working document on Animal Welfare Bodies and National Committees to fulfil the requirements under the Directive*, pp. 16-18;
ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/pdf/endorsed_awb-nc.pdf
- the *RSPCA/LASA Guiding Principles on Good Practice for Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies: Chapter 11; Promoting a Culture of Care*; tinyurl.com/RSPCA-LASA-AWERB

The concept, principles and structural and behavioural elements that contribute to a Culture of Care have been well described in these documents. Establishments need to interpret and implement these within their own organisations, with a clear vision of what a Culture of Care means for them.

The culture of an organisation relates to the beliefs, values and attitudes of its staff and the development of processes that determine how they behave and work together. A Culture of Care is one that demonstrates caring and respectful attitudes and behaviour towards animals and encourages acceptance of responsibility and accountability in all aspects of animal care and use. **This should go beyond simply having animal facilities and resources that meet the minimum requirements of the legislation.**

A healthy Culture of Care requires a shift away from merely responding to externally imposed standards, to one in which leaders and frontline staff are actively committed to improving Three Rs, animal welfare and research and working together to do so.

The key factors which blend together to foster the appropriate Culture of Care within an establishment include:

- Appropriate behaviour and attitude towards animal research from all key personnel.
- A corporate expectation of high standards with respect to the legal, welfare, Three Rs and ethical aspects of the use of animals, operated and endorsed at all levels throughout the establishment.
- Shared responsibility (without loss of individual responsibility) towards animal care, welfare and use.
- A pro-active approach towards improving standards, rather than merely reacting to problems when they arise.
- Effective communication throughout the establishment on animal welfare, care and use issues and the relation of these to good science.
- The importance of compliance is understood and effected.
- Those with specified roles know their responsibility and tasks.
- Care staff and veterinarians are respected and listened to and their roles and work are supported throughout the establishment.
- All voices and concerns at all levels throughout the organisation are heard and dealt with positively.

The Animal Welfare Body (AWB) in every establishment is in ideal position to drive the Culture of Care, and should demonstrate effective leadership in this area. The AWB should ensure, in collaboration with senior management, that there are appropriate structures in place to promote a suitable culture, and that these structures are kept under review to ensure the outcomes are delivered effectively.