

Bi-Annual Newsletter



Animals in Science - Education Trust

Message from the Trust Chairman



It is often the case that awareness of the existence and aims of a new organisation takes time to develop, and in this AS-ET is no exception. However, as will be clear from this Newsletter, we are now enjoying most gratifying recognition in terms of both donations for supporting our work and applications for bursaries to enable those involved with the care and welfare of laboratory animals to carry out their duties as effectively as possible. With continuing vital support from both individuals and corporate sponsors, we hope to be able to meet the increasing demand for help with attending and organising relevant courses. This is particularly crucial at a time when many academic institutions

are struggling to make adequate provision for enabling their staff to keep up with legislative and technical developments.

AS-ET owes its existence to the far-sightedness of members of the Institute of Animal Technology and, as will be clear from this Newsletter, the Institute continues to support us actively in a variety of ways. The Trustees are extremely grateful for this unstinting help and hope the membership of the IAT feels that we are beginning to meet expectations.

Finally, we would welcome any suggestions as to how we might increase the scope of our support for education and training.

Sir Richard Gardner

Bursaries

£23,000 awarded in grants

In the period from January 2012 to the present AS-ET has agreed to supply grants valuing £23,000. The grants were used to support 17 Bursary applicants, helping with fees for short courses on specific topics, NACWO courses, further and higher education courses, small research projects, developing courses and the AS-ET Special Travel Bursary. From time to time reports from recipients

of grants appear in our newsletters and in the IAT Bulletin, one of the more original of which can be found later in this newsletter.

The Trustees are very pleased to be able to provide this financial help. However, we are conscious that the money we distribute is not our own, it is contributed by our sponsors and supporters so the pleasure we feel should be shared by all the readers of this Newsletter.

Special Travel Bursary

For the first time this year the Trustees offered a special travel bursary. It was open to animal technical staff under the grade of facility manager and will pay for the registration, travel and accommodation costs for the winner to attend AALAS National Meeting in Baltimore. Candidates were required to write an essay entitled 'What do you regard as the most important issues in optimising the care and welfare of laboratory animals?'

Nine technicians submitted essays and the winner was selected by four judges who judged the essays without knowing the identity of the applicants. It is intended to publish some of the essays either in the IAT Journal or in a future newsletter.

The winner of the 2013 special travel bursary is Sharon Jones of UCB Celltech. A report of her visit will appear in the next edition of this newsletter. We would like to thank all technicians who made the effort to enter and produced some interesting essays in doing so.

Finances

Our audited accounts for 2012 showed AS-ET had an income of £14,597. Our Corporate Sponsors have continued to be generous and we have added to their number in the last year. The logos of all our sponsors are reproduced in this newsletter, on our inserts in the IAT Bulletin and the AS-ET website. People visiting our website and clicking on a sponsors logo will be taken to the sponsors' own website.

The number of Official Supporters has risen to 152. Official Supporters are people who contribute a minimum of £6.00 a year by direct debit. We would like to increase the number of regular givers so please encourage your colleagues to join. As well as helping in the work of AS-ET, supporters receive an AS-ET lapel badge, advanced sight of the newsletter and an invitation to the AS-ET reception at Congress. Direct debit forms can be found on our website (www.as-et.org.uk).

The Institute of Animal Technology continues to support AS-ET, both financially and in kind. We are grateful for the help they give and specifically we would like to thank Nikki Stevens (Administrator), Allan Thornhill (Website Coordinator) and Sarah Lane (Bulletin Editor).

AS-ET Activities

AS-ET was represented at the LASA Winter Meeting in Manchester, the IAT West Middlesex Branch Technician Day in London and the IAT Congress in Eastbourne. We welcome the opportunity these meetings give us to meet with our supporters and sponsors and to discuss our work with delegates. We appreciate the opportunity to take our stand to these meetings free of charge.

The IAT West Middlesex Branch made a donation of £1,500 to AS-ET from the proceeds of their Technician Day meeting in London, a very generous contribution for which we are extremely grateful.



Officers of the IAT West Middlesex Branch presenting a cheque to Prof. Sir Richard Gardner

IAT Congress is always a busy meeting for AS-ET, although as it takes place over several days we have more time to meet and talk to people. At the Trade Reception Prof. Sir Richard Gardner, Chairman of the Trust, meets all of our corporate sponsors and presents certificates to acknowledge their contributions. Photographs of these presentations can be seen in this Newsletter.

This year we held a silent auction on our stand at Congress, which raised £170. The items for the auction were donated by: LBS, Datesand Ltd. and Agenda

Resource Management. Edstrom Industries and IPS Product Supplies have donated items to raise money at a later date. Our thanks go to these companies.

The IAT Congress also provided an opportunity for us to hold the AS-ET Reception. This event is hosted by the IAT and it enables us to meet with our sponsors, supporters and helpers. At the last Congress Sir Richard gave an update on the work of AS-ET, thanked the people present for their support, and announced the Special Travel Bursary.



Sponsor David Spillane (Tecniplast) and IAT Council Chair Steve Owen talk to AS-ET Trustee Karen Gardner at the AS-ET Reception.



Sponsors and supporters at the AS-ET Reception



AS-ET Trustee Jon Tyzack with IAT and AS-ET Administrator Nikki Stevens. IAT Council Member Charlie Chambers and AS-ET Sponsor Paul Sanders (Agenda)



AS-ET Sponsors David Smith (Pfizer) with James Wilson and Gemma Marshall (Edstrom) at the AS-ET Reception.

The Future

We are pleased to note that AS-ET is becoming more widely known and this is resulting in more bursary applications being received. We expect more funding requests from applicants to study for HE qualifications and hope the general increase in bursary applications will continue. However education and training courses are expensive and if the bursaries awarded are to increase so must our income.

We welcome ideas for fundraising activities, if you have any ideas please contact us through our website or visit our stand at the following meetings:

- LASA Winter Meeting 2013
- West Middlesex Branch Technologist Trade Day
- IAT Congress 2014

Bursary Report

Most of the bursary requests we receive are from individuals who want to study for standard qualifications, attend NACWO courses and similar short training sessions. The report reproduced below is different. Dr Beth Greenhough (Queen Mary, University of London) and Dr Emma Roe (Southampton University) applied to AS-ET for a small travel bursary to enable them to carry out a pilot study of how laboratory animal technologists put ethics into practice. The Trustees thought this a very worthwhile study and were pleased to grant the bursary. The pilot study helped Beth and Emma gain a grant from the Wellcome Trust to fund a larger study.

Pilot study: Exploring how laboratory animal technologists put ethics into practice

Project Update April 2013

In preparation for undertaking research into the care work performed by laboratory animal technologists (ATs) we have been involved in a series of meetings and pilot interviews with laboratory animal researchers, ATs, and stakeholders working across the laboratory animal science sector. In this document we briefly summarize our preliminary observations and issues for future research and provide an update on future plans.

Preliminary Observations

1. The public image and laboratory animal research. People spoke about barriers to improving the public image of laboratory animal research.

Perceptual barriers: Laboratory animal research can often have a negative public image, as reflected in the 2012 MORI Poll.

1. This negative image can persist in the information given out to those training to work with animals (e.g. Zoology and animal behaviour students).
2. This is reflected through junior ATs talking about their perceptions changing as they were inducted into the profession.

Physical barriers: The legacy of past anti-vivisectionist

action has created a need for security and confidentiality.

1. This further hides animal research from public view and perhaps creates an impression there is something to hide.
2. Staff are understandably careful about talking openly about their work, but this means that the care-work they perform also often remains hidden.

2. Improving staff welfare. Many ATs develop strong relationships with the animals in their care and can encounter emotional challenges.

Support:

1. Of the facilities we visited there was an emphasis on transparency and a sense that junior ATs are encouraged to come forward with their concerns to line managers; this was viewed positively
2. ATs can lack opportunities to develop a peer-support network, especially in smaller research centres with few staff. In the past this may have been provided by IAT training inset days, but the opportunity is lost as more training is done via distance learning. Equally, the cost of attending events such as the IAT congress is increasing.

Training:

1. Induction and training procedures can support staff to deal with emotional demands of their work. These could be developed further.
2. Training is key also for providing a sense of career progression and development for some ATs, and they welcome the opportunity to become involved in more complex tasks such as taking blood samples, anaesthesia or breeding work.

Feeling informed:

1. To hear the results of research involving animals in their care is important for staff well-being. Fostering a close association between research scientists and ATs can support this, but where reasons of confidentiality/IPR restrict the sharing of research findings this is more difficult to achieve.

3. Maintaining good animal welfare. UK animal welfare standards are considered high. The management of ATs, their personal commitments and the capacity for them to interact with animals works to maintain good welfare.

Staff commitment and skills:

1. The ATs care-work can result in going above and beyond basic protocols to ensure the welfare needs of the animal(s) are met.
2. Managers play an important role in driving forward procedures for improved staff and animal welfare – and an acknowledgement these go hand-in-hand.
3. There is some debate as to whether standards are maintained by allowing ATs to specialise in a particular area of work or a group of animals, exclusively; or to rotate between sections and species.

Challenges to future welfare improvements:

1. Should funding for welfare improvements be written into research funding applications and/or contracts?
2. There are concerns about the new EU directive generally seen to be advancing a lower standard of welfare than existing UK regulation.
3. And concerns about how to ensure the welfare of animals held in linked research units outside of the UK or bred outside of the UK.
4. New developments in research (e.g. the increased use of SPF mice) pose new welfare challenges, for example, restricting staff interaction with the animals, highlighting the on-going need to balance experimental and welfare needs.
5. Public and private sector facilities face different challenges in terms of resources, species and types of research.

(Please note that in order to comply with ethical protocols and protect confidentiality we will only discuss our findings in general terms and avoid references to specific individuals or institutions.)

Future Work

In Dec 2012 we learnt that we have successfully been awarded a small Ethics and Society Grant from the

WellcomeTrust. This will fund a series of interviews with junior ATs and a period of participant observation at one animal research facility. This research is designed to provide further insight into the work carried out by ATs, and in particular how junior ATs learn how 'to do the right thing' for their own and the animals' welfare. This research will commence on the 1st August 2013 and will focus on the following research questions:

- What practical and or institutional obstacles do ATs face when working to ensure good animal welfare?
- How is 'doing the right thing' discussed and experienced in the context of ATs meeting the challenges of reconciling scientific research, animal care and personal workplace well-being?
- What variables (e.g. prior experience, formal training, species) affect the development of AT skills?

It is intended that this research will benefit laboratory animal research and facility staff, ethical review bodies and animals themselves, by highlighting the role of the AT-animal relationship in ensuring good animal welfare and providing recommendations for supporting ATs in facilitating good animal welfare and contributing more fully to ethical discussions. In the longer term insights into the role of ATs in facilitating animal care may also be used to promote better public understanding of animal research, and the researchers have recently met with the charity Understanding Animal Research to discuss how this might be achieved while maintaining the confidentiality of research participants.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who has helped us in our preliminary investigations into the care work done by animal technologists and would like to acknowledge the support of ASET in providing travel expenses for some of the preliminary interviews.

Contact

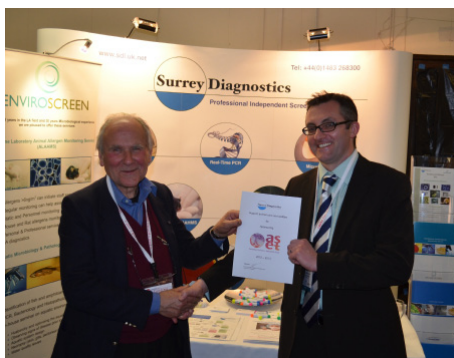
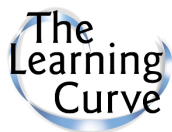
For more information about any of the aspects of the project discussed here, or if you would like to become involved in future research please contact Beth Greenhough (b.j.greenhough@qmul.ac.uk) or Emma Roe (e.j.roe@soton.ac.uk).

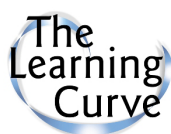
Acknowledgements

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www.animalsinscienceeducationtrust.org.uk

Animals in Science - Education Trust

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