

The ASC

Animals in Science Committee

Dr Sally Robinson, Chair of the Animals in Science Committee
5th Floor, 2 Ruskin Square, Broad Green, Croydon, CR0 2WF
Email: asc.secretariat@homeoffice.gov.uk

30 September 2025

Dear Lord Hanson,

Animals in Science Committee – Non-Technical Summaries and Retrospective Assessment Advice

In November 2024, the Animals in Science Committee (ASC) was commissioned to provide advice on standards for non-technical summary (NTS) and retrospective assessment (RA) content that will support openness and transparency and more effectively align them with the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 (ASPAs). I am pleased to enclose the advice of the ASC following this review.

The report summarises the findings of the Animal Welfare Ethical Review Body (AWERB) Subgroup from its review of NTSs and RAs against their corresponding licences, legal obligations under ASPA, and further desirable criteria beyond compliance. The Subgroup additionally considered evidence provided by individuals and organisations who are directly involved in animal work, and other relevant wider stakeholders in the animals in science landscape. The ASC have reviewed the Subgroup's report and ratified its findings.

In summary, the review identified shortcomings in the effectiveness of NTSs and RAs, reiterating concerns raised by external stakeholders and in the Home Office commission itself. Despite their intended role in public engagement, many NTSs remain overly technical, vague, and lacking in meaningful detail. RAs, while valuable for reflection and learning, showed inconsistent quality and availability, with some delays in publication undermining transparency. The report highlights the urgent need for clearer guidance, improved accessibility, and stronger oversight, particularly through enhanced training, streamlined submission processes, and the facilitation of a searchable database. These measures are essential to ensure that NTSs and RAs fulfil their purpose as tools for public accountability and scientific clarity.

The ASC has made sixteen recommendations to resolve the issues highlighted by this review, and to strengthen transparency in these public facing documents. The intended audience of each recommendation has been specified in Section 6.

The ASC would like to thank the Home Office for its assistance to the ASC during this review. Additionally, we would like to extend our thanks to the stakeholders who took the time to respond to our questionnaires and provide valuable evidence for this report.

We look forward to working with the Home Office in support of the implementation of these recommendations.

Yours sincerely,

S. Robinson

Dr Sally Robinson
Chair of the Animals in Science Committee