

## **Animal Welfare Body at the University of Turku, Central Animal Laboratory: effective communication through focus group**

**Varpu Laine<sup>1</sup>, Emrah Yatkin<sup>1</sup>**

*<sup>1</sup>University of Turku, Finland*

The functions of animal welfare body (AWB) are described in the EU Directive and include advising staff and keeping them up-to-date on the 3Rs and animal welfare in relation to supply, housing, care and use. In practice, AWB also follows the development and outcome of projects and aims to resolve occurred animal welfare issues. AWB may be organized in different ways in different institutions. At the University of Turku, the AWB has been organized as focus groups meeting with each research group to resolve any arising welfare issue. We organize approx. 15-25 AWB focus groups meetings in a year. In these meetings designated veterinarian (DV), researchers involved in the project, facility manager and animal technician meet in person (or via zoom during COVID) and discuss confidentially. In many cases hands on approach is needed, and the DV, researcher and animal care staff meet also in the animal facility and resolve the issues by the animals. The meeting memo is confidential and is signed by the persons involved in the case and available for the supervising authority. Lessons learned from animal welfare case or instructions regarding the 3Rs can be distributed to the whole research community by animal facility staff and through annually organized general AWB meeting involving representative of several research groups. AWB meetings organized in Focus groups provide effective and intimate discussions to solve acute welfare problems. The best result is reached when all participants have been heard and given equal input to form the decision.