

## Report

### ICLAS Visiting Grant for Professional Development in LAS in Europe

**Hosting Institution: GDL, Utrecht University, Netherland.**

**Date of grant approval: 03 May 2023**

**Date of visit: 3 – 18 December 2023**

My name is Reham Desoky, and I am an animal welfare officer at the UResearch Animal Facility (URAF), the only registered facility compliant with the international guidelines in Egypt. I am also a member of the Cairo University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (CU-IACUC) in the medical science sector.

The purpose of the visit was to observe the management of daily work in the facility to enhance the workflow in my animal facility and give me the drive to improve our training.

The visit was divided into two parts.

- The first week was spent in the GDL facility with different units.

On the first day (Monday), I had a tour to see the facility, and I saw how they were changing the animal cages, the labels, and ear tagging. The animal caretaker explained the workflow and techniques of animal care. After that, I had a very interesting conversation with Ir. Mendy Meeuwse, the facility director. She told me about the facility system and showed me the design of it. She answered all my questions and offered any help we might need for my facility. I mentioned that I would like to learn more about the responsibilities of the attending veterinarian, the animal welfare officer, the animal researcher in the institution, and the whole process from the beginning, so she kindly arranged a very interesting 5 days in the facility.

On Tuesday, I had the chance to see the morning routine in the small animal experimental unit with Roy, the animal caretaker, and how they deal with the animals, changing the cages, the documentation, and how they report on whatever happens. I was really impressed with how they use everything available to implement the cage environmental enrichment.

After the morning routine, they scheduled me an appointment with Mienke Luijendijk, the animal welfare officer and quality advisor. It was incredibly helpful, as we don't have an animal welfare body in our facility. She explained the whole process of getting a project license, who is allowed to deal with the facility animals, all the paperwork, and the route of any new animal experiment. Then I went to the large animal unit. I was with Helma, the caretaker responsible for this unit. It was interesting to see how they prepared the minipigs for the next-day surgery. At the end of the day, Pim took me on a tour through the faculty of veterinary medicine, where I saw the educational models, the library, and the classrooms.

Wednesday was very exciting; it was my first time to attend a minipig surgery. It was amazing. Then I had an appointment with the responsible veterinarian, Koen Vaessen. It was a nice chat

about the facility and his role and responsibilities. He told me about the health mentoring of the facility. I asked him about the nutrition and the type of food and water they use. He provided me with all the information I needed.

Thursday, I start the day with the infection unit tour. Then I had an appointment with Ron Timmermans, he told me about the GDL's PRIS portal. And how the researcher began the experiment by ordering the needed animals after they had a work protocol approved by the Animal Welfare Body. He told me also about the quality lab roles and the trusted suppliers. After that, I saw the washing area and the robots for cage washing; it was very nice.

- The second week wasn't less exciting than the first week.

I began the week by visiting Poonawalla Science Park to see the breeding unit for mice. I was very excited to visit the breeding centre as we are about to establish a new unit in our facility to breed small animals. There were a lot of questions and inquiries. I met with Tara, the head of the unit; she took me on a tour of the unit. She explained how they deal with different strains, cleaning, disinfecting, washing, and cage changing. The way they transport the animals to the experimental unit, the precautions, and how they provide them with water during the transportation. And also about the documentation and the labels for each strain.

By coincidence, a Laboratory Animal Science course, led by Dr. Esther Langen, was held that week, so on Tuesday I had the chance to attend the first day of the practical session. It was nice to see how they teach the students and learn new techniques in handling and restraining. Then I had a meeting with Prof. Bas Rodenburg, who is the head of the unit Animals in Science and Society. We talked about animal welfare.

Wednesday, I started with a lecture about small animals' anatomy, one of the laboratory science course's theoretical parts, then I went to one of the most interesting tours I had there, the tour of the plastinates. Lisa, a biotechnician in the Clinical Sciences department, led the tour, and she explained the process of hard and soft plastination and the differences between them. At the end of the day, there was the second practical session on administration.

On Thursday, I had a tour with the department of Clinical Science unit Companion Animals. Nadine, one of the animals caretakers, showed me the department units and gave me a brief about the different animals in the clinic.

On Friday, Pim took me on a tour to the farm animals.

The outcomes: all the information gained from the on-site visit transferred to my colleagues in our animal facility, and we have already started to set up a new plan to enhance the management and the workflow. Thanks to this visit, we now have a better idea of what we need to improve and how.

I am grateful to the ICLAS European Regional Committee and the ICLAS African Regional Committee for granting the fund and giving this opportunity to a non-European researcher for the first time. And to Dr. Hanna-Marja Voipio, who lightened my way through the grant process. I hope more researchers from Africa and the Middle East could also receive this grant.

And I would like to thank Marian Verhage, GDL Manager, and all the facility staff for their hospitality and warm welcome.

Thanks to Pim Rooymans and Esther Langen, they made my visit unforgettable. They made all the efforts they could to arrange the best program I could benefit from.

Sincerely,

Reham S. Desoky  
Animal Welfare officer  
UResearch Animal Facility  
The Egyptian International Foundation for the Development of Laboratory Animal Science,  
EG-LAS.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'RD' with a stylized flourish.