

If you are injured...

Contact your supervisor immediately if you are bitten or scratched by an animal, if you cut or scratch yourself on animal caging, or if you are experiencing unusual disease symptoms.

For students, Health Services is located in the Student Center building room 125, extension 2235. For faculty or staff, see your regular health care professional.

If you need urgent assistance after hours or on weekends dial 956-326-2911 for the campus police.



*Texas A&M International University
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee*

Working Safely With Laboratory Animals



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WORKING SAFELY WITH ANIMALS

TAMIU actively promotes the safe handling of animals used in research. This brochure introduces some of the risks associated with the handling of animals (not all of which are currently in use at TAMIU) and describes the steps that should be taken to minimize them.

Risks in Handling Animals

The hazards associated with handling animals or their tissues can be divided into three categories:

- 1) Physical injuries include bites and scratches inflicted by rodents, rabbits, cats, and other species. The key to preventing these types of injuries is proper training of research personnel by animal care staff or other qualified individuals.
- 2) Allergies are associated with respiratory or contact allergens such as animal dander or urine. All personnel should be aware that laboratory animals are sources of potential allergens. The best policy in most circumstances is to prevent exposure by wearing adequate personal protective equipment.
- 3) Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted from animals to humans, and from humans to animals. Although zoonotic diseases are not common in modern animal facilities, their prevention and detection must be an important concern of all personnel who work with animals in the laboratory. Remember that zoonotic diseases can be transmitted by tissues as well as by live animals.

Zoonotic Diseases

Humans are sometimes susceptible to infectious diseases carried by animals even when the animals themselves show few signs of illness. Micro-organisms in the normal flora of a healthy animal may cause serious illness in persons who have had no previous exposure to the organism and lack protective immunity. Persons who are immunosuppressed because of medication or underlying medical conditions may be at a higher risk of infection. Workers should be aware of these possibilities and take precautions to minimize the risk of infection. In the event that you do become ill with a fever or some other sign of infection, it is important to tell your physician that you work with animals.

Personal Hygiene and Protection

There are simple steps that can be taken to lessen the risk of infection when working with animals. These include not eating, drinking or applying cosmetics or contact lenses around animals or animal care areas; wearing gloves when handling animals or their tissues; taking care not to rub your face with contaminated hands or gloves; and washing your hands after each animal contact.

Research personnel can protect themselves by limiting their use of needles and syringes, taking enough time to give injections properly, anesthetizing animals prior to inoculation with infectious agents, and using a two-person team to inoculate animals. Do not recap used needles! Discard them promptly in a biohaz-

ard "sharps" container. For procedures such as necropsies, bedding changes, and tissue and fluid samplings, containment devices such as biological safety cabinets, full face respirators or other personal safety gear should be used as indicated. Consult your supervisor or the Department of Laboratory Animal Medicine if you feel you need additional training at any time!

What You Should Know

...If You Work with Rodents or Rabbits: Allergies are common among personnel who work with rodents (e.g., mice, rats, gerbils, guinea pigs, hamsters) and rabbits. If you already are sensitized to rodent dander, or if you become sensitized, you should report this immediately to the IACUC chair and your supervisor.

Contact with rodents requires awareness of diseases such as dwarf tapeworm, lymphocytic choriomeningitis (LCM), salmonellosis and ringworm. To protect against these agents, care should be taken to limit direct and aerosol exposure to soiled bedding containing feces and urine.

Gloves and masks limit exposure to soiled bedding and help prevent transmission of diseases such as ringworm and fur mites. Animals should be transported in micro-isolator caging and with approved covers in the freight elevator only to help limit exposure to non animal workers.

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