UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT ARLINGTON

INSTITUTIONAL ANIMAL CARE AND USE COMMITTEE

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY SOP

1. Institutional policies for personal hygiene, handling hazardous agents, and personnel protection:
   a. Investigators are required to identify possible hazards (chemical, biological, animal-related, etc.) on the protocol application for animal use. Potential hazards and/or possibility of zoonoses transmission are considered by the IACUC during protocol review. At least one staff member from the Environmental Health & Safety Department serves as a member of the IACUC to provide safety consultation and expertise. All individuals applying for approval to conduct work with animals must complete the Institution’s Occupational Health & Safety training, available as an online module. Based on the hazard risks of the protocol, individuals may also be required to complete additional training such as Hazard Communication Training, Biosafety Training, or Bloodborne Pathogen Training.
   
   b. To reduce the possibility of zoonoses transmission, strict personal hygiene is enforced. Eating, drinking, smoking, and the application of cosmetics is strictly prohibited in the animal facilities except for the designated breakroom area. Protective clothing is required within the animal care facilities. In daily practice, lab coats should be worn and changed between labs housing different species. All protective clothing will be laundered within the animal facility. A bathroom and shower are also available for use in the animal facility. Individuals should wash their hands before and after handling animals and whenever protective gloves are removed. Gloves should be worn while handling animals or if there is a potential for contact with hazardous chemicals or infectious agents. Goggles or face shields should be worn if handling hazardous or infectious liquids. In certain instances, as determined by the Environmental Health & Safety Department, respiratory protection may be required. Environmental Health & Safety will provide respirator fitting and training when applicable.
   
   c. The Environmental Health & Safety Office is responsible for picking up and disposing of hazardous waste and sharps generated in the animal facilities.

2. Pre-placement medical evaluation, required immunizations, preventive medicine program, zoonosis surveillance, and procedures for reporting and treating injuries:
   a. Prior to being given access to the animal care facilities, an individual must submit current proof of tetanus immunization and complete a medical evaluation questionnaire to help identify any medical conditions that may pose a health risk as a result of contact with animals. The medical evaluation questionnaire queries the individual on any known allergies, conditions of known suppressed immune system, and also includes
information regarding the danger of zoonoses, and pregnancy while working with animals. Individuals with existing or potential health concerns will be identified and may require further precautions and protection before beginning work with animals. Additional precautions may include: limited access to animals or facilities, additional personnel protective equipment requirements, additional training in hazards and preventive measures, and/or frequent health monitoring. Individuals are required to complete the medical evaluation questionnaire on an annual basis to monitor any changes in health conditions.

b. To further help prevent zoonoses transmission and injuries (such as animal bites and scratches); individuals are required to complete hands-on training before beginning work with animals. The Animal Care Staff conducts the hands-on training which includes species-specific information on animal behavior and animal handling techniques.

c. The institution also participates in a sentinel program through Charles River Laboratories Diagnostic Services to aid in surveillance of zoonoses. The animals are tested for pathogens monthly by the Animal Care Staff using Charles Rivers’ ImmunoComb Kit. One mouse and one rat sample are submitted to Charles River quarterly for complete serology testing. Results of these tests are documented and maintained by the Animal Care Technician.

d. If an individual is injured while working in the animal care facilities, they should immediately report to the campus Health Center or their personal physician for treatment. Any injuries incurred while working in the animal care facilities should be reported as soon as possible to the Animal Care Staff and the Environmental Health & Safety Department. Environmental Health & Safety will keep records of accidents and injuries.

e. On a Semi-Annual basis, the IACUC will be provided a report by the Environmental Health & Safety Department which identifies accidents, injuries, occupational health inspection findings, health and safety concerns, high-risk areas/research projects, etc. to be considered by the IACUC and Animal Care Staff. Information from this report will be considered and included in the IACUC’s Semi-Annual Program Review and Facility Inspection.

3. Description of covered personnel; procedures for hazard and risk assessment; and training of personnel:
   a. All personnel involved in the care and use of research animals, regardless of employment status, will require an appropriate level of participation in the Occupational Health & Safety Program based on the level of risks encountered. This may include: investigators, clinicians, animal-care technicians, laboratory technicians, students, visitors, IACUC members, workers in areas adjacent to laboratories, maintenance and custodial personnel, Environmental Health & Safety staff, and security personnel.
b. Hazard and risk assessment begins during the IACUC’s initial review of the research project. Occupational health & safety, including potential hazards, personnel at risk, training, etc. is addressed in the initial animal use protocol application. Hazards and risks are considered by the IACUC, which includes at least one member from the Environmental Health & Safety Department. Appropriate protections and precautions for identified hazards and risks may be required as a condition of research approval.

c. Additionally, before an individual begins activities involving animals, they must enroll in the Occupational Health & Safety Program. This includes completion of the Occupational Health & Safety training, documentation of tetanus immunization and completion of a medical evaluation questionnaire (referenced above). For individuals identified with health concerns or a potential for health concerns, a specific plan of occupational health & safety will be developed for the individual.

d. The Occupational Health & Safety Training Module is available as an online module, and completion is required before IACUC approval and commencement of animal research. All personnel involved in the care and use of research animals are required to complete the training. The OH&S Training includes information pertaining to: physical hazards, allergens, zoonotic diseases, containment procedures, animal health and handling procedures, and generally accepted protective procedures and equipment for working with commonly used lab animals.