

General Information: Potential Hazards
for
VISITING RESEARCHERS, NON-UC DAVIS COLLABORATORS,
VOLUNTEERS, STUDENTS, and ANCILLARY PERSONNEL



The general hazards associated with contact with animals fall into three categories: zoonoses, allergies, and injuries.

ZOONOSES

Zoonoses are diseases of animals that are transmissible to humans. They may present a significant hazard in some situations where animals are used. Fortunately, many laboratory animal species today are bred to be free of zoonoses that were once more common in these animals. However, laboratory and farm animals can be infected with zoonotic agents, some of which can be life-threatening to humans. Field research with wild species remains an important source of exposure to zoonotic agents. Prevention of exposure to these animal-related illnesses requires knowledge of the zoonoses that may be found in the animals with which you will be working. If you are exposed through a bite, scratch, needle stick, aerosol droplet, mucosal secretion, feces or urine, there is the potential for you to become infected. You must notify your Principal Investigator or Instructor and seek medical consultation.

You may be at increased risk for zoonotic infection if you are immune compromised (e.g. taking steroids such as prednisone on a regular basis, diabetic, infected with HIV, autoimmune diseases). If you have questions or concerns about your health status and the risks that you may be exposed to, please make an appointment with your healthcare provider for a health evaluation and to address any questions.

The Hazard Analysis Tool located at <https://safetyservices.ucdavis.edu/units/ehs/research/laboratory/lhat> and the Public Health Agency of Canada at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/index-eng.php> are some sites that are excellent resources regarding zoonotic diseases.

ALLERGIES

Some people develop allergies to the animals they work with or to their own pets. The incidence is quite high - some estimate that as many as 15% of people are allergic to some animal species. If you are allergic to a species that you have regular contact with, it can be debilitating. If you suffer from asthma, having contact with a species to which you are allergic can present a significant health risk.

Individuals with allergies may display any of a number of symptoms. These include allergic rhinitis (a condition characterized by runny nose and sneezing similar to hay fever); allergic conjunctivitis (irritation and tearing of the eyes); asthma (characterized by wheezing and shortness of breath), and contact dermatitis (a red, bumpy rash that may appear). If you have a stuffy nose or other respiratory signs, and if it seems to last longer than a common cold (weeks instead of days) then you may be suffering from an

allergy. If you develop suspicious symptoms whenever you are exposed to a particular species, then you may have an animal allergy.

People may be allergic to any animal species. The allergens are proteins that are excreted in the saliva, urine, and from various glands associated with the skin. The proteins tend to be sticky and become associated with the animal's hair and with particles of dander. The allergens are unique to each species of animal, thus it is possible to be allergic to mice and not to rats or vice versa. It is also possible to be allergic to multiple species.

The most effective way to control and prevent allergies is to minimize exposure to the allergens. If you have animal allergies, or think you are at risk of developing such allergies as a result of working with animals, you should make an appointment to discuss your concerns with a healthcare provider and obtain the necessary advice about the best methods you can use to protect yourself.

INJURIES

All animals are capable of inflicting bites and scratches. Small animals, such as rodents and rabbits, usually cause only minor wounds. Larger species like cats, dogs, and nonhuman primates can inflict severe wounds. Bite and scratch wounds can become infected due to the normal bacteria present in the animal's mouth or toenails, or by bacteria that are present on your own skin. To prevent bites and scratches it is important to use proper animal handling techniques. Protective garments, such as gloves, gauntlets, and long-sleeved laboratory coats can be useful in limiting injury to the hands and arms.

When you handle or move large livestock such as horses or cattle, injuries can also result if the animal kicks or if you get pinned between the animal and a building, implement, or other fixed object. The best way to avoid such injuries is to understand animal behavior. Only by knowing what to expect in certain situations can you protect yourself and others from injury.

Your Principal Investigator or Instructor will train you in appropriate animal handling and advise you about appropriate protective clothing. If you are bitten, scratched, or otherwise injured (e.g. needle stick), immediately wash any wounds with soap and water, and immediately inform your Principal Investigator or Instructor about the injury. Call Occupational Health, the Student Health Center, or your health care provider to help you make an informed decision regarding your medical needs.

Occupational Health Services: (530) 752-6051

Student Health and Counseling Services: (530) 752-2300

Institutional Animal Care and Use: (530) 752-2364