

## Appalachian State University Animal User's Training Program

### Basic Health and Safety Information for Individual's using Nonhuman Vertebrate Animals in Research and Teaching

Public Health Service Policy (PHS) and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (National Research Council, [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=5140](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=5140)) identify the need for an occupational health and safety program for all personnel who work in laboratory animal facilities. The emphasis of the Appalachian State University Animal User's and Animal Resource Facility training programs is to prevent illness, which includes early diagnosis and treatment when an injury or illness occurs. The Appalachian State University Animal Resource Facility (Facility) Manager is responsible for ensuring appropriate occupational health and safety measures for him or herself and Facility employees, and Principal Investigators (PIs) are responsible for ensuring appropriate occupational health and safety measures for themselves and their students who work with laboratory animals.

See (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/PHSPolicyLabAnimals.pdf>) to review PHS policy. In particular, Principle II suggests the need for considering health and safety in research. Similarly, health and safety in research have been long-standing priorities of The National Research Council. In 1997, this group addressed these priorities in research animal care ([http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=4988&page=R7](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=4988&page=R7)).

### Training, Safety, and Accidents

A limited amount of training material is included in section 7, Occupational Health and Safety, of the *Appalachian State University Animal Resource Facility User's Manual* ([www.orsp.appstate.edu/forms\\_orsp/iacuc/iacuc\\_arfmanual.pdf](http://www.orsp.appstate.edu/forms_orsp/iacuc/iacuc_arfmanual.pdf)). Specific training for Facility equipment such as the fume hood, autoclave, and cage washer will be administered on an as needed basis through the Facility Manager. Material Safety Data Sheets are stored in the Facility Manager's office and are available to all users. Anyone can and should report unsafe working or learning conditions to her or his PI or the Facility Manager.

From time-to-time the Facility houses venomous animals. In case of a bite from a venomous animal, call 911 (or 9-911 from a University phone) immediately to request emergency assistance.

All other animal bites and all other injuries should be attended to at the Appalachian State University (University) Health Center (262-3100) when it is open. If the Student Health Center is closed, **employees** should proceed to the Watauga County Medical Center Emergency Room or visit their personal health care provider, and be sure to **tell the healthcare provider that it is a work-related injury**. **Non-employees** should seek medical care from an appropriate healthcare provider according to the level of severity and their own health insurance plan.

All injuries must be reported within 24 hours to the Safety & Workers' Compensation Office. Non-employees use the one-page [ASU Accident Report](#) form. Employees suffering minor injuries not requiring any medical attention should also use the one-page form. All other injuries to employees must follow the full workers' compensation filing procedures listed at the [Workers' Compensation link](#) on the ASU Safety & Workers' Compensation Office website.

Signage with appropriate contact information in the case of injury is posted on the Facility Office door and above both phones in the Facility main hall.

### **Protective Clothing**

Faculty, students, and facility staff should wear **lab coats** when handling animals, when in surgery, and when working in the morgue. **Shoes** must be closed toed, and ideally be rubber soled, to protect feet from injuries. The Facility requires that “**booties**” be worn over shoes; these shoe covers are provided by the Facility. **Gloves** are strongly recommended when handling animals. Appropriate **gloves** are required when handling chemicals, including cage-wash detergent, preservatives, and cleaning solutions.

**Filtering Facepiece Respirators** or “masks” are not required, but are recommended when a person has a zoonotic disease or is allergic to the animals housed in the Facility. Voluntary use of a filtering facepiece respirator is a personal choice. The University’s policy and procedure for voluntary respirator use can be found at: <http://www.busaf.appstate.edu/safety/RespProtHome.html> and then selecting the “**What if I don't NEED a Respirator but WANT to Wear One Anyway?**” link. Individuals should read the available material, and follow instructions to complete and return the voluntary use form if appropriate.

### **Physical Exams, Immunizations and Medical Conditions**

Facility staff are required to complete the Research Animal Caretakers Health Form each year, and submit it directly to the Director of Student Health Services. This form is available from the Safety & Workers’ Compensation website, [www.safety.appstate.edu](http://www.safety.appstate.edu), under the Biohazards heading. University personnel who handle animals on an occasional basis are encouraged to discuss the form with their personal health care provider. To protect employee privacy, only the employee and/or the healthcare provider should keep copies of the Research Animal Caretakers Health Form. The healthcare provider should only provide the University Safety & Workers’ Compensation Office (262-4008) with a letter stating that the review has been completed, and listing any special medical needs that must be met to keep the employee safe on the job. A sample Proof of Medical Evaluation letter is included on the Safety & Workers’ Compensation website.

A pre-employment **physical examination** is recommended for all University personnel who work with animals in order to develop a baseline against which subsequent changes can be measured. Facility staff (whose primary duties including handling animals) may discuss the Research Animal Caretakers Health Form, by appointment, with a physician at the Mary S. Shook Student Health Services. To make an appointment, call the Student Health Service at 262-3100.

Based upon the animals currently housed, Facility staff should have a **tetanus vaccine** every ten years. Facility staff, including employed student workers, will be provided with this vaccine at the employing department’s cost when prescribed by the examining physician at Student Health Services. Should the vaccine not be available at Student Health Services, the employee must contact the Safety & Workers’ Compensation Office at 262-4008 to make arrangements for vaccination elsewhere. Students

who work with animals as part of their studies may obtain a tetanus vaccine through the Student Health Service (262-3100) or through their own healthcare provider.

**Pre-exposure rabies vaccinations** are important for employees working with high-risk animals. Some information about high-risk animals is available in rabies epidemiology documentation at the Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/epidemiology.html>). Information about the vaccinations is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/rabies/exposure/preexposure.html>.

Faculty and student animal researchers who are not Animal Facility Staff are encouraged to communicate with their own **personal health care provider** about their work with animals. Having a medical baseline against which subsequent changes can be measured is a good idea. A current **tetanus vaccination** is recommended, and if working in the field with high-risk animals a **pre-exposure rabies vaccination** is important. Faculty who use animals in teaching should inform students of any potential hazards associated with classroom or field contact with animals.

Researchers proposing to do fieldwork should provide evidence in their IACUC protocol that they are aware of the health risks associated with trapping and handling animals and will take precautionary measures to protect personnel. Of particular concern are species that are venomous or carry zoonotic diseases. A resource about **zoonotic disease** can be found at:

[http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse\\_by\\_diseases.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse_by_diseases.htm)  
or [http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse\\_by\\_animal.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/browse_by_animal.htm).

Students conducting research or taking a class involving the use of animals who have **medical conditions** are required to speak to their supervisor (PI or course instructor) and the Facility Manager to determine what will constitute a safe working or learning environment. All such conversations will be handled confidentially and any information provided will be kept confidential. Any animal research personnel (Facility staff, PI, student researcher, etc.) or student in a course working with animals who are **immunosuppressed** should consult Student Health Services (262-3100) or his or her personal medical care provider regarding exposure to animals. Pregnant women or women who become pregnant should contact their personal health care provider about the increased risks to themselves and their unborn child. Persons known to be allergic to animals or who develop allergies should take steps to limit exposure to animal dander, saliva, bedding, and urine.

## Personal Hygiene

Good personal hygiene goes hand-in-hand with good safety practices to help maintain a safe work environment. Hand washing is mandatory upon entering and exiting the Facility. Sinks, soap, and paper towels are located in the holding rooms, cage wash area, surgery room, the morgue, research labs, and in the rest rooms. Coat hooks are located at each end of the Facility and outside of N140 for individuals to hang coats and obtain lab coats. Remember that appropriate and/or protective clothing are an important part of maintaining good hygiene. Should Facility personnel or researchers need them, showers are available in the rest rooms with adequate space for temporary clothing storage. Lockers are provided in the restrooms and can be used to store coats, clothing, bookbags, and personal items not used in the Facility.