POLICY

It is the policy of the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) to minimize the risk of injury to personnel who have exposure to research animals/animal tissues or fluids, to promote health, and to protect the university. It is the responsibility of principal investigators to ensure that laboratory staff are informed of and participate in the UNMC Occupational Health and Safety Program for Animal Exposure (UNMC-OHS-AE).

Personnel with exposure to research animals/animal tissues/body fluid are required to enroll in the OHS-AE Program and obtain medical clearance before access to animal facilities is granted. Elements of the program include identification of hazards related to assigned tasks, individual and periodic health assessment to determine and evaluate personal risk, and proper training for the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), specialized facilities, and equipment.

Program participation requirements and overall risk are determined by the type(s) of animals personnel are exposed to, intensity/duration of exposure, experimental hazards, personal proficiency, and the health status of the individual.

The institution has ethical and legal requirements to inform individuals of potential health risks and appropriate precautions for mitigation. Risks are mitigated through institutional policies, engineering controls, work practices, and the use of personal protective equipment.

Individuals who require limited, temporary access to research animals and/or facilities, (i.e. IACUC members/staff, regulatory inspectors/site visitors, public visitors, consultants), will be escorted by authorized personnel to animal housing locations and will be required to complete and sign the Visitor Form. Visitors will wear required personal protective equipment and adhere to all UNMC, IACUC, and Comparative Medicine (CM) policies.

All unsafe conditions, accidents, and injuries must be immediately reported to the direct supervisor, CM management, and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).

REGULATION

The use of animals for research, teaching, and testing at UNMC is regulated by, and conducted in accordance with, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) of 1966 as amended, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) AWA regulations; the U.S. Public Health Service Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy), and the Rules of Accreditation of the Association for Assessment and Accreditation of Laboratory Animal Care, (AAALAC International).

The PHS Policy and the AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation require UNMC to follow the National Research Council Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, (Guide 2011). The Guide indicates that an occupational health and safety program, based on “risk assessment” must be part of the overall animal care and use program. Failure to adhere to the requirements in The Guide and AAALAC International standards could result in the loss of federal funding at UNMC or loss of accreditation of the program.

The UNMC OHS – AE Program was established in 1992, and focuses on maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. The program is consistent with federal, state, and local regulations as well as the National Research
PROCEDURE

1.0 Medical Clearance Request and Authorization:

1.1 Complete and submit an initial Confidential Health History Questionnaire to the UNMC Employee Health Clinic through the Research Support System (RSS) for evaluation.

1.2 Additional medical information or diagnostics may be required based on the information provided in the Questionnaire.

1.3 Complete the educational presentation/examination entitled “Animal Contact Safety Training” through UNMC’s web-based training platform.

1.4 The Employee Health Clinic medical personnel in conjunction with UNMC EHS and Human Resources must authorize animal contact and/or animal facility access.

1.5 Periodic health status reviews and reauthorization will be conducted via the submission of a confidential health history questionnaire to medical personnel at the Employee Health Clinic via the RSS.

A. Category I clearance (routine animal facility access, contact with rodents, guinea pigs, rabbits, pigs) will require renewal once every three years. A Tdap (tetanus) booster is required every 10 years. Medical history including animal contact, allergies, immune and reproductive status, previous surgeries, respiratory protection, and exposure to experimental hazards will be evaluated.

B. Category II clearance (contact with sheep, goats, cattle) will require annual renewal, including Q-fever titer check.

C. Category III clearance (contact with Non-human Primates) will require annual renewal, including MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) and TB (tuberculosis) screening. Personnel with non-reactive measles titer or active TB may be required to follow additional precautions for animal health.

2.0 OHSP Clearance Denied or Access Restricted:

2.1 Any refusal to enroll in this program or any refusal to comply with prescribed restricted access to animal facilities will be further evaluated by the Institutional Official (IO) in conjunction with UNMC Human Resources for further action which may include termination of employment.

3.0 Reporting Injuries, Accidents, and Exposures:

3.1 For all serious and/ or potentially life-threatening injuries, UNMC employees and visitors are directed to immediately call 9-5555. Treatment will be provided at the Emergency Department.

3.2 For minor health-related events, employees should contact the Employee Health Department at the South Doctor’s Tower, Suite 600 (402-552-3563).

3.3 All animal-related events should be reported to Comparative Medicine (402-559-4034), EHS (402-559-8395), and the relevant PI.

3.4 Biologic exposures must be reported to the OUCH Pager: 402-888-OUCH (6824). Enter a call-back number after the tone. The Medical Call Center will triage care and coordinate with CM, EHS, Employee Health (during normal business hours) or the Emergency Department (after hours).

3.5 Submit a completed Incident Report to Human Resources, even if medical evaluation/ care is not required.

4.0 Visitor Policies

4.1 A Visitor is defined as an individual who is not enrolled in the UNMC – OHS- AE program and is requesting limited, temporary access to animal facilities or research animals.

4.2 Visitors who will not work with animals:

A. Visitors and their UNMC Host/ Principal Investigator must read, complete, and sign the Visitor Form.

B. A CM Manager must review and sign the form to grant approval. Completed forms will be filed by CM Administration.

4.3 Visitors who are requesting to work with animals:
A. Limited access to work with research animals may be requested for various reasons and will be reviewed as such cases arise. A maximum of 5 visits within a 6 month period for work with rodents, rabbits, and pigs may be requested. Work with other animal species may require documentation of immune status or vaccine history, or full enrollment in the UNMC – OHS – AE Program.

B. Access Request and Processing:

1) Request a Visitor Form from the IACUC office. The form should be completed and returned to the IACUC office with any required supporting documentation for each individual requesting access.

2) The IACUC and EHS will perform a risk assessment based on the amount of time access is requested, species and work to be performed, existing OHS enrollment, exposure to hazards, etc.

3) Research personnel will be notified of approval or denial of the request, in writing, from the IACUC office. Approval is granted based on the outcome of risk assessments for the visiting scientist, the collective UNMC research community and, the University system. If a request is denied, the visiting scientist may have the option to enroll in the UNMC – OHS – AE Program and complete required training.

4.4 The following rules apply to all visitors:

C. Individuals must be accompanied by authorized personnel at all times while visiting the animal facility.

D. Visitors with known animal allergies may not visit housing locations where rodents are not held in filtered caging racks.

E. An individual entering a room where non-human primate(s) (NHP) are present must provide proper documentation verifying negative TB status and measles vaccination/protective titer. Comparative medicine staff members will ask to see proof of clearance prior to entry.

F. The PI/ research host is responsible for approved visiting scientists and must accompany these individuals at all times. Visitors must comply with all UNMC, IACUC, CM and Safety rules and regulations.