UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR ANIMAL RESEARCH PERSONNEL

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) has assumed responsibility for administering the occupational health program. Mandated by federal requirements and external laboratory animal care accreditation agencies, the primary goal of the program is to evaluate and, if necessary, address potential health risks to faculty, students or staff that may be associated with the use of animals in the research environments.

SCOPE

All faculty, staff, visiting researchers and students who work directly with vertebrate animals, and those who work in animal housing areas must participate in the occupational health program described below.

DEFINITIONS

Animal Exposure Risk Assessment Form: A questionnaire filled out by each participant in animal research. It must be completed prior to working with animals and annually thereafter.

CBR: Center for Biomedical Research

Covered Individual: all faculty, staff, visiting researchers and students who work directly with vertebrate animals, and those who work in animal housing areas are covered under this program.

EH&S: The UND Office of Environmental Health and Safety. Phone: 777-3341, Mail: PO Box 9031

Exposure Incident: any incident involving a) skin, eye, mucous membrane, or parental contact with blood or potentially infectious materials, b) bites, c) scratches, or d) other wounds that result from or during the performance of a covered individual’s duties.

IACUC: Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee is the research compliance panel that reviews and approves animal research.
Medical surveillance: The process of evaluating the health of employees as it relates to their potential occupation exposures to hazardous agents, including animals.

RESPONSIBILITIES

University policy requires that all faculty, staff, visiting scholars and students who work directly with vertebrate animals, unfixed animal tissues or body fluids, and those who work in animal housing areas must participate in the occupational health program. Continuing authorization to use animals is contingent upon participation in the program, including the initial and annual completion of the Animal Exposure Risk Assessment Form.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment
Hazard identification and risk assessment is performed as a joint effort of departments and personnel, including the CBR Director, principal investigators, researchers, and staff from Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S). An EH&S employee is appointed as a member of the IACUC. EH&S participation helps to assure that researchers, their staff and departments incorporate hazard assessments and health and safety procedures as an integral part of their research plan.

EH&S staff routinely monitor laboratories that involve infectious agents, recombinant DNA molecules, hazardous chemicals, radiation and other physical hazards, or the use of animals that present unique hazards. The goal of this activity is to educate laboratory staff regarding the potential for hazards and help identify training and information resources.

Medical Evaluation and General Health Information
All covered individuals must complete the Animal Exposure Risk Assessment Form and submit it to the EH&S for evaluation.

The information provided is evaluated by a registered nurse.

Exposure Control Methods:
The control of exposures to occupational hazards associated with animal research or handling is achieved through the application of engineering controls, work practices and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Your supervisor will provide you information on how to obtain PPE. If you have questions about obtaining PPE, please email contact EH&S.
General Health Information
Exposure Incident: It is important to report all bite wounds, scratches, possible exposures, and other incidents. Use the UND Incident Reporting procedures to ensure proper notification of EH&S. Wounds must be cleansed immediately in your area. Instructions for proper cleaning of wounds will be given to you by your supervisor.

If you are immune compromised or under treatment that may impact your immune system, special considerations may need to be made for your safety. You are encouraged to confidentially discuss your condition with the registered nurse at EH&S.

Ergonomics: If you would like general information about working safely and effectively (lifting, repetitive motion, etc.), please contact EH&S to request information or an evaluation.

Medical Management of Injury of Illness:
A notification and medical treatment program is in place for accidents, including bites and scratches. For non-emergencies, the program participant is directed to immediately notify the supervisor of the work area and contact EH&S.

Immunizations
The decision to provide immunization to an employee or student is made because of a defined, recognized risk associated with the research or animal handling activity. Immunizations are provided after a review of the animal protocol and a determination that medical surveillance activities are required. EH&S staff are involved in a review of research protocols to assess the risk associated with animal related research. Immunizations are recommended for clearly identified at-risk employees where a safe and effective vaccine or toxoid exits. If immunizations are indicated, the service is provided at no cost to the employee.

Tetanus immunizations are recommended for animal handling staff, in accordance with the guidelines of the federal Centers for Disease Control.