If you work in the Department of Laboratory Animal Resources
Personnel in the Department of Laboratory Animal Resources (LAR) come into contact with all species of animals used at the Health Science Center. Therefore, precautions are taken to ensure the health of all the personnel and all the animals. For this reason, DLAR personnel are required to participate in an extensive occupational health regimen. Further information is available from the department.

If you need FURTHER INFORMATION
For further information, contact the Institutional Animal Care Program, extension 73718.

SAMPLE

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR PERSONNEL WITH LABORATORY ANIMAL CONTACT

The Occupational Health Program has an important role in the Health Science Center's Institutional Animal Care Program. This program, operated by the University Physicians Group, is designed to protect both HSC personnel and the laboratory animals. This brochure is an introduction to the current "Occupational Health Program for Personnel with Laboratory Animal Contact". The requirements of this program are based on guidelines in the NIH Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.

WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?
All HSC personnel who work in laboratory animal facilities or who have contact with laboratory animals or animal tissue should know about this program. Personnel included are those individuals involved in the direct care of animals and their living quarters and those individuals who have direct contact with animals (live or sacrificed), their viable tissues, body fluids, or wastes.

This includes all
LAR staff,
investigators and laboratory assistants;
some personnel in
maintenance,
physical plant,
security, and
housekeeping;
as well as some students, consultants, and visitors.

WHAT IS INCLUDED?
The Occupational Health Program includes
medical examinations,
tuberculosis screening (PPD or X-ray),
rabies vaccinations,
tetanus-diphtheria vaccinations, and
medical evaluation and treatment.

A tetanus vaccination is strongly encouraged.

HOW DO YOU ENROLL?
Contact the University Physicians Group at (123) 456-0000, to enroll in the Occupational Health Program.

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:
See a physician if any of the following occur:

You are bitten by an animal;
You are scratched by an animal; or
You are experiencing unusual symptoms.

Workers’ compensation injuries may be treated at any urgent care clinic. More serious injuries may be treated at any emergency room. Contact your supervisor immediately so that he/she can submit the "Employer’s First Report of Injury or Illness" form to Human Resources, optimally within 24 hours. For documentation purposes, the employee’s supervisor must notify the University Physicians Group of the injury by calling (123) 456-0000.
DISEASES COMMUNICABLE FROM ANIMALS TO HUMANS

Humans usually are not susceptible to infectious diseases suffered by animals. However, there are some important exceptions. Infections of animals may, on some occasions, produce significant disease in people. These infections are called zoonotic diseases. They are communicable diseases that can be transmitted from animals to humans. In most cases, the animals found in the normal human environment do not normally cause disease in people.

Some common zoonotic diseases include:
- Rabies
- Brucellosis
- Salmonellosis
- Ehrlichiosis
- Lyme disease

Protective clothing, such as outer garments, gloves, masks, and face shields, should be used when handling primates. As a general rule, primates should be handled only when properly trained, with appropriate containment. All personnel who come into contact with primates should be careful to avoid wounds that may be infected. Gloves should be worn when handling primates. Thorough hand washing after handling any potential source of infection is necessary.

Contact the University Physician Group at (123) 456-0000 as soon as possible for a consultation with the occupational medicine physician.

DISEASES COMMUNICABLE FROM ANIMALS TO HUMANS

If you work with DOGS or CATS

Dogs and cats are used in long-term studies at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). All animals used in these studies are vaccinated against rabies. An exception is made for those animals used in acute experiments. Even though these animals are under veterinary supervision, some risk of exposure to the disease exists. Because the observation period may be too short to allow typical development of the disease in the animal, all human caretakers, students, and staff who come in contact with dogs or cats, particularly to have the pre-exposure prophylaxis and annual medical examination by an occupational medicine physician.

Parasites such as whipworms, tapeworms, and sarcoptic mange are a potential risk to those involved in the care of infected animals. Those working with toxoplasmosis are at risk of infection. Ringworm, a fungus infection of the skin, is also a risk. Cat scratch disease is a zoonotic infection that can be transmitted by a bite or scratch from a cat to a human. In most cases, it is a self-limited disease. The disease in many cases is self-limiting, and an examination by a healthcare provider may be necessary.

If you work with PRIMATES

Primate colonies pose special zoonotic risks. Nonhuman primate diseases are often transmissible to humans and can be a serious health hazard. To be transmitted, animals in all primate facilities must be in good health and stable. Primates should be handled only by trained personnel. If you work with primates, a consultation with the occupational medicine physician may be necessary.

Common human viruses such as measles and Herpesvirus simplex may also be transmitted to humans and can be a serious health hazard. The risk of transmission may be reduced by proper containment of animals. Reduced transmission is best accomplished by wearing protective clothing, including gloves, and face shields, and by using a hood when handling primates.

If you work with FISH

Fishes can transmit a variety of diseases to humans. These diseases can be transmitted through water or through contact with fish. Some of these diseases, such as tuberculosis and brucellosis, can be transmitted to humans through contact with fish. Others, such as salmonellosis, can be transmitted through contact with fish or fish products.

Please refer to the comprehensive guide on zoonotic diseases for more information.

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW...

If you are FEMALE

Female caretakers, especially those of childbearing age, without immunity to toxoplasmosis, should not be exposed to possible toxoplasmosis infection. Cat feces should always be avoided. Gloves should be worn when handling cats. Thorough hand washing after handling any potential source of infection is necessary.

Working with hazardous agents, in particular exposure to the risk of infection, is discouraged.

Contact the University Physician Group at (123) 456-0000 as soon as possible for a consultation with the occupational medicine physician.

If you work with ANIMALS

An animal caretaker may be exposed to a variety of infectious agents. These include bacteria, viruses, and parasites. Some of these agents can cause serious disease in humans. It is important to be aware of the potential risks and to take steps to minimize exposure.

Some common zoonotic diseases include:
- Rabies
- Brucellosis
- Salmonellosis
- Ehrlichiosis
- Lyme disease

Protective clothing, such as outer garments, gloves, masks, and face shields, should be used when handling primates. As a general rule, primates should be handled only when properly trained, with appropriate containment. All personnel who come into contact with primates should be careful to avoid wounds that may be infected. Gloves should be worn when handling primates. Thorough hand washing after handling any potential source of infection is necessary.

Contact the University Physician Group at (123) 456-0000 as soon as possible for a consultation with the occupational medicine physician.
If you work with RODENTS
Contact with rodents requires precautions against such diseases as toxoplasmosis, tapeworm infection, lymphocytic choriomeningitis (LCM), and Salmonellosis/Shigellosis, as well as ringworm and other dermatomycoses. Additional concerns for investigators using wild rodents are leptospirosis and bubonic plague. Attention should also be paid to the possibility of allergic reactions. LCM, a rodent neurological virus, is transmissible to man; care must be taken when handling rodents as well as potentially infected materials, such as bedding and feces, in the laboratory.

If you work with FARM ANIMALS
Q fever, a potentially serious human disease caused by the ricketsia Coxiella burnetii, was formerly quite common in those drinking unpasteurized milk and in slaughterhouse workers exposed to the tissues of freshly slaughtered cattle, sheep, and goats. It is now known that the organism is shed abundantly from the placental membranes of sheep. This route of exposure has been the cause of recent cases of Q fever pneumonia in laboratory workers. Sheep used in reproductive research or other studies should be examined serologically for possible infection, and personnel working where exposure is possible should take extra precautions. Gloves, mask and protective clothing are required for individuals working with pregnant sheep and goats. Infected persons can be effectively treated with antibiotics.

Erysipelas in pigs can be transmitted as a severe focal skin infection to man, and pigs showing diagnostic lesions should be handled with care. Similar appearing though less severe, skin lesions are also seen on the hands after contacts with sheep and goats infected with contagious ecthyma, "Orf," and vesicular stomatitis.

Rabies can also be a threat in large animals, such as cattle and horses. If working with cattle or horses, the pre-exposure rabies prophylaxis and an annual follow-up are encouraged.

All personnel working with farm animals are required to have a banked serum sample stored with the University Physicians Group.

If you work with BIRDS, BATS, RABBITS, FISH or AMPHIBIANS
Unusual research species pose other risks. Birds have diseases such as psittacosis and avian tuberculosis. Only inspected and properly quarantined birds should be used in research studies or teaching demonstrations. Rabies can also be a threat in blood-sucking bats.

Therefore, personnel working with this species are advised to have the pre-exposure rabies prophylaxis and an annual follow-up.

Those working with rabbits should be conscious of possible allergic reactions.

Aquarium related cuts and abrasions require careful first aid because of exotic bacterial flora in the water.

Salmonella is frequently harbored in turtles and other reptiles and amphibians.

If you work with HAZARDOUS AGENTS
There should be methods for monitoring exposure to potentially hazardous biological, chemical, and physical agents. Protective devices should be used when possible and other safety practices consistent with current safety guidelines should be adopted. Potentially hazardous chemicals in the animal laboratory and care room may be found in disinfectants, cleaning agents, pesticides, and as feed and bedding contaminants.

Hands should be washed after handling chemicals, infectious materials, animals, and before leaving the laboratory. A biological safety cabinet should be used when handling infectious materials and a fume hood when handling toxic materials. All work surfaces should be decontaminated daily. All contaminated materials should be decontaminated (by autoclaving or chemical disinfection) before washing, reuse, or disposal.

If you are female of childbearing age, you should confer with the occupational medicine physician or the Safety Office prior to exposure to the possible inhalation of toxic chemicals.

For further information on working with hazardous agents, contact the Safety Office, extension 72955.