Title/Subject: **ANIMAL HANDLER OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM**

Applies to: ☒ faculty  ☒ staff  ☒ students  ☒ student employees  ☒ visitors  ☒ contractors

Effective Date of This Revision: February 3, 2011

Contact for More Information: Risk Management, Environmental Health & Safety

☐ Board Policy  ☒ Administrative Policy  ☒ Procedure  ☐ Guideline

**Background:**
It is the policy of Central Michigan University (CMU) to comply with all Federal, State, and local regulations regarding the provision of personnel health programs for individuals who have animal contact.

As discussed in the National Research Council Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (National Academy Press), an occupational health and safety program must be a part of the overall animal care and use program and should focus on maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. The program should be based on risk assessment, risk management, personnel training, preventive medicine, and when required, medical treatment.

**Policy:**
All personnel involved in animal care and/or use shall participate in the university animal handler occupational health and safety program. Supervisors (e.g., department chairs, faculty and other CMU employees or affiliates who have oversight of University employees, students, or other individuals) are responsible for implementing this policy with individuals under their supervision. The Department of Risk Management/Environmental Health & Safety (RMEHS) is responsible for the overall management of the occupational health and safety program for personnel involved in the care and/or use of animals. Individuals with questions regarding this policy should contact the Manager of Risk Management/Environmental Health & Lab Safety (774-4189).

1. **Individuals Covered Under Policy**

Participation in this program is mandatory for all CMU employees who have animal contact. Volunteers, outside contractors, or visiting clients should be apprised of health and safety issues by the appropriate CMU contact person at the animal site.

   a. **Non-CMU Individuals (volunteers, outside contractors, visiting clients)**

   Non-CMU individuals are required to follow this policy as if they were CMU employees, due to their affiliation with the university. Cost (if any) for compliance will be the responsibility of the affiliated individual or his/her employer.

   b. **Students**

   CMU students will not normally be required to enroll in the animal occupational health and safety program if the IACUC determines their only exposure to animals is limited to structured or centrally scheduled credit-courses. However, the class instructor will provide them with information about any health considerations relative to the species with which they will be working.

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Authority: George E. Ross, President
History: None
Indexed as: Animals; Training & Animals; Safety & Animals; Health & Safety
2. Basic Occupational Health and Safety Program Components

A risk-based assessment of all persons involved in contact with animals or animal tissues is done to determine their level of participation in the occupational health and safety program. This assessment considers: 1) hazards posed by the animals, 2) hazardous biological, chemical, or physical agents used in the animal activity, and 3) susceptibility of personnel. Based on the extent of exposure, the next step may be a review of information provided to CMU’s consulting occupational health physician on a completed "Initial Medical Questionnaire for Individuals Who Work with Animals".

3. Definitions

a. Animal: Any live or dead vertebrate animal used or intended for use in research, research training, teaching, experimentation, demonstration, or biological testing or for related purposes.

b. Animal Facility: Any and all buildings, rooms, areas, or enclosures, including satellite facilities, used for animal confinement, maintenance, breeding, or experiments inclusive of surgical manipulation. A satellite facility is any containment outside of a core facility or centrally designated or managed area in which animals are housed for more than 12 hours.

c. Risk Assessment: The process by which risks associated with working with animals (such as hazardous biological, chemical, or physical agents; allergens; or zoonoses) are identified.

d. Risk Management: The process by which identified risks are managed through such actions as education, training, personal protective equipment, zoonosis surveillance, or immunization.

e. Risk Training and Education: A program of training and education about areas of risk when working with animals in general or with specific species or conducting specific experiments.

f. Supervisors: Department chairs, faculty, and other CMU employees or affiliates who have oversight of University employees, students, or other individuals and who are involved with animals; those individuals who are not CMU employees but are affiliated through courtesy or adjunct appointments may serve as supervisors.

4. Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment

Hazard identification and risk assessment is a dynamic, ongoing process performed throughout the animal care and use program by a range of personnel and committees. Cornerstone elements include protocol review, specialized committee evaluations, routine facility inspections, and medical assessment and surveillance.

The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) protocol submission form queries investigators regarding potential use of biological agents, hazardous chemicals, and radioisotopes. Protocols involving the use of biological agents or radioisotopes require pre-approval from specialized committees (i.e., Institutional Biosafety Committee, Exposure Control Committee, and Radiation Safety Committee, respectively) prior to IACUC approval. The Risk Management/Environmental Health & Safety Department (RMEHS) assists with evaluating proposals or activities involving unique hazards (e.g., chemicals, UV light, noise, lasers, electrical hazards, compressed gas, etc.).

Routine facility inspections are performed by IACUC and RMEHS to provide ongoing hazard and risk assessment, as well as to assess the adequacy of control measures. Medical professionals contribute to the comprehensive risk assessment process by evaluating the health status of the individual with respect to particular animal species contacted, potential exposure to harmful materials or activities, and the nature and extent of the contact with the animal.

The most common biological hazards and risks that have been identified include allergy/asthma, zoonotic infections, and bites/scratches. The most common chemical hazards include the use of anesthetic gases, disinfectants/cleaners, and chemicals for preserving tissues. The most common physical hazards include slips, trips, falls, and lifting hazards.

5. Work Practice and Engineering Control Measures

Detailed work practice and engineering control measures are specified in relevant IACUC protocols. Some fundamental measures applicable to nearly all animal care and use activities are described below.
Hand washing is recommended after handling animals and prior to leaving animal care and use areas. In areas where sinks are not available in the immediate vicinity, hand sanitizer dispensing stations are typically provided to readily facilitate infection control until proper hand washing facilities become available. Eating, drinking, and smoking are prohibited in all animal rooms.

Laboratory coats, scrub tops, gowns, disposable coveralls, or other garments are worn as appropriate to protect street clothes from contamination when handling animals. Gloves are worn whenever handling animals, their fluids, tissues, excreta, or soiled bedding to reduce exposure to allergens and potentially zoonotic agents. Protective equipment such as head covers, shoe covers, eye protection, hearing protection, and respirators may be required as determined by risk assessment. Personnel who use respirators are enrolled in the University Respiratory Protection Program managed by RMEHS. Essential elements of this program include medical clearance, respiratory selection and fit testing, and training. Protective clothing and equipment is not worn beyond the boundary of animal work areas.

Sharps precautions are rigidly enforced, as are methods to minimize human exposure to biological agents and hazardous experimental or laboratory chemicals (e.g. anesthetic gases, tissue fixatives). RMEHS tracks and manages certification of all chemical fume hoods and biological safety cabinets used to protect personnel.

Personnel who are not involved in animal care and/or use but nevertheless need to enter areas where animals are housed or used (e.g. facilities management personnel, custodial staff, outside contractors) must be escorted by an authorized person who can inform them of the risks and provide the necessary personal protective equipment for the area.

6. Training

Prior to participating in procedures involving contact with animals, personnel are required to complete an “Initial Medical Questionnaire for Individuals Who Work with Animals”. The occupational health physician will review the questionnaire and determine which personnel require a medical appointment. During the appointment, the physician discusses risk factors relevant to the individual’s work.

The RMEHS Department provides training and oversight of chemical, radioactive, biological, and other occupational hazards. All University personnel have access to this training.

Personnel engaged in animal research or teaching attend a mandatory training session taught by the coordinators of animal facilities or their designee. The training is designed to present the most up-to-date guidelines and procedures to all animal care personnel, and include training on proper use of anesthetics, analgesics, and tranquilizers, animal handling techniques, and zoonotic diseases. During training, individuals who are pregnant, want to become pregnant, or are immunocompromised are advised to consult with the occupational health physician.

7. Screening.

a. Each participant will complete an Initial Medical Questionnaire for Individuals Who Work with Animals, which is available from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (774-6777). The questionnaire will be submitted to CMU’s consulting occupational physician, who will then screen the completed questionnaire using specific criteria. As part of the questionnaire, participants will be queried on allergies associated with animal handling. Employees with a history of pre-existing animal allergies or asthma will be provided with information and training as appropriate, and if needed will be referred to their primary care provider. Health histories are used to assess risk focusing on allergies/asthma, zoonotic disease, animal bites/scratches, and immunization updates. If employees are deemed higher risk (i.e. has asthma/allergies to animals, pregnant/immunosuppressed) they may be asked to come in for a physical exam or other testing as well as documentation from their treating physicians as to their ability to work with animals.

b. Participant's protected health information will be treated in a manner consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule and CMU's HIPAA policies.
c. If any hazardous biological, chemical and physical agents are identified in the initial screening, the appropriate CMU oversight committees for these areas will be notified.

8. Preventive Medicine (Health Maintenance Program)

a. If CMU's consulting occupational physician identifies significant potential health risks, he/she may schedule pre-employment physical exams, further evaluate the participant, provide immunizations, order titers, give occupational health recommendations, and refer as appropriate. Participant's protected health information will be treated consistent with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule and CMU's HIPAA policies.

b. Medical care of CMU personnel for work related injuries or illness will be provided by either the Central Occupational Medicine Program, 779-5600, or Central Michigan Community Hospital ReadyCare, 773-1166.

c. Prior to participating in procedures involving contact with animals, personnel are required to complete an “Initial Medical Questionnaire for Individuals Who Work with Animals”. Individuals may decline to participate in a preventive medicine program recommended by CMU's consulting occupational physician by signing appropriate waivers acknowledging their awareness of risks and agreeing to waive, release and hold harmless CMU, provided said individuals have first undergone the training described in this policy and have conferred with CMU's consulting occupational physician. CMU's consulting occupational physician shall obtain any such waiver and only share it with CMU personnel as appropriate. CMU, however, reserves the right to require individuals to participate in a preventive medicine program, as it deems necessary.

9. Immunizations

All participants will have the following documented through their Initial Medical Questionnaire for Individuals Who Work with Animals:

a. Immunizations will be updated according to recommendations of the Immunization Practices Advisory Committee (ACIP) of the Center for Disease Control. Booster doses will be recommended as needed.

b. Other vaccination recommendations will be determined on an individual basis after the risk assessment that reviews animal species, risk exposure, and personal health issues. The CMU consulting occupational physician, with added consultation as needed from the CMU Biosafety Officer or the Principal Investigator of the project, will make this determination.

Individuals may decline to participate in an immunization program recommended by CMU's consulting occupational physician by signing appropriate waivers acknowledging their awareness of risks and agreeing to waive, release and hold harmless CMU, provided said individuals have first undergone the training described in this policy and have conferred with CMU's consulting occupational physician. CMU's consulting occupational physician shall obtain any such waiver and only share it with CMU personnel as appropriate. CMU, however, reserves the right to require individuals to participate in a preventive medicine program, as it deems necessary.

10. Animal-Related Illness, Injury, or Unsafe Conditions

All participants should be familiar with CMU's Guidelines for Handling Injuries on Campus, which can be found at https://www.cmich.edu/fas/fsr/rm/risk_management/Pages/Injuries.aspx

a. Individuals must notify their supervisor of suspected zoonosis or suspected work-related illness or work-related injury.

b. Supervisors must report work-related illness or injury as prescribed in CMU's Guidelines for Handling Injuries on Campus.
c. Bites and scratches should be flushed immediately with water and then scrubbed with soap and water prior to reporting for treatment.

d. Injured personnel must report injuries to CMU Workers Compensation by calling 774-7177 and should report for medical attention as follows:

   i. During clinic hours, non-employee students should go to University Health Services (774-6591) for treatment or referral.

   ii. During clinic hours, employees (faculty, staff and student employees) should report to the Central Occupational Medicine Program (COMP), 779-5600.

   iii. In the event of clinic closure, all injured personnel should go to Central Michigan Community Hospital ReadyCare, 773-1166. After hours, injured personnel should go to the CMCH emergency room.

e. CMU Workers Compensation will report and track injuries and illnesses and maintain appropriate paperwork as required by Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MIOSHA).

f. Employees, students, volunteers, outside contractors, and visitors should report all unsafe conditions, practices, or equipment to the supervisor, instructor, or RMEHS whenever deficiencies are noted.

g. With the exception of outside contractors, non-CMU affiliated individuals should see their normal health care provider.

h. Outside contractors should contact their workplace Workers’ Compensation office.

11. Monitoring of Policy

The CMU Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) together with the Department of Risk Management/Environmental Health & Safety (RMEHS) shall periodically assess this policy for compliance and potential needed changes.

Central Michigan University reserves the right to make exceptions to, modify or eliminate this policy and or its content. This document supersedes all previous policies, procedures or guidelines relative to this subject.