

Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users Program

I. Introduction

This Occupational Health and Safety for Animal Users Program (“Program”) has been established in accordance with applicable federal law and TCU’s assurance with the National Institutes of Health Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW) to identify hazards involved with animal care and use, to assess the risk(s) associated with those hazards, and to eliminate or manage the associated risks to an acceptable level. This Program is designed to prevent occupational illness and injury through hazard identification and assessment of the risk associated with identified hazards; medical evaluation and preventative medicine; education and training; and engineering and work practice control measures. This program incorporates by reference TCU OSHA programs, which are overseen by the TCU Office of Risk Management, including, but not limited to the Hazard Communication Plan, and Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan. Please visit the following website for more information: www.tcusafety.tcu.edu.

II. Applicability

This Program applies to TCU personnel with direct contact with laboratory animals, tissues, or animal by-products held within TCU research facilities. For Program purposes, laboratory animals are any vertebrate animals produced for or used in research, testing, or teaching.

III. Program Requirements

- A. Program Participation. Participation in the Program is mandatory for TCU personnel with direct contact with laboratory animals, tissues, or animal by-products held within TCU research facilities, and voluntary for individuals, who are concerned with occupational exposure to laboratory animals, but are not required to enroll in the Program. Individuals with isolated one-time contact (e.g. participation in training sessions), visitors and other personnel with incidental animal contact are advised of specific health risks, related precautions and recommendations through a risk acknowledgement form, but are not required to formally enroll in the medical evaluation and monitoring portion of the Program.

All participants must complete a risk assessment and training upon initial induction into the Program and prior to engaging in the care and use of laboratory animals. Participation in the Program is required and on-going for as long as the participant is engaged in the care and use of laboratory animals. Participants may elect to consult with a personal physician, at their own expense, in lieu of submitting the questionnaire to the TCU engaged occupational health professional or in response to a “not cleared” result. In any event the completed questionnaire must be provided to the TCU engaged occupational health professional by the participant or by the participant’s physician/health care provider. The participant’s physician or health care provider may contact the TCU engaged occupational health professional on the participant’s behalf. In all circumstances, only the TCU engaged occupational health professional can make the determination of “cleared”.

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

At the initial evaluation, an occupational health service provider reviews the risk assessment questionnaire responses and assesses the risks for conditions such as allergies, zoonotic diseases, infections, or other adverse health effects based on individualized occupational exposure. At the conclusion of the evaluation, the occupational health service provider determines the individual to be either (1) cleared: medically eligible to perform the stated activities without restriction (2) cleared with conditions: medically eligible to perform the stated activities with additional requirements (e.g. respiratory protection or vaccination), or (3) not cleared: deemed medically ineligible to perform the stated activities. The occupational health service provider's disposition is noted in a master list that is maintained by the TCU Office of Research. The master list is shared with the Animal Facilities Manager(s), and the IACUC. Protocols are not approved if they indicate the intention to include animal handlers who are not compliant.

B. Participant Responsibilities.

1. Principal Investigators, and Lab Managers/Supervisors. Principal investigators are responsible for making sure that all personnel who have contact with laboratory animals are named on their IACUC protocols, as appropriate, and have completed all healthcare requirements. Any individual responsible, in whole or part, for lab supervision or management must, at a minimum, comply with the following:
 - a. Read, understand and comply with this Program;
 - b. Implement procedures for the laboratory in which they supervise or manage, in accordance with this Program;
 - c. Ensure that all individuals working in their laboratory and required to enroll in this Program are enrolled in, and are in compliance with, this Program;
 - d. Ensure that all individuals working in their laboratory receive required training and education;
 - e. Provide personal protective equipment required for the job tasks; and
 - f. Inform all individuals working in their laboratory of occupational hazards and the necessary precautions to be taken to protect against these hazards.
2. Employees and Students. Employees and students to whom this Program applies must comply with the following requirements:
 - a. Read and understand this Program (seek clarification for any areas not understood);

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

- b. Comply with this Program;
 - c. Complete all required training;
 - d. Participate in the risk assessment;
 - e. Properly wear, maintain, store, and replace appropriate personal protective equipment as necessary;
 - f. Follow safe work practices for handling animals;
 - g. Obtain information prior to using an unfamiliar chemical or performing a new task; and
 - h. Report any job related injuries or illnesses, signs and symptoms of allergies, animal bites or scratches or any unsafe working condition to the laboratory supervisor, PI, or Animal Facilities Manager, and seek medical attention, as necessary.
- C. Oversight and Management. Program oversight and management is shared by several TCU parties, including the Office of Research, IACUC, Risk Management, Health Services Provider, Safety Department, Animal Facilities Manager, and Hazardous Materials Safety Coordinator.
- 1. Office of Research.
 - Develop, implement, and oversee of the Program.
 - Periodically assess Program training and education, revise as necessary.
 - Provide information regarding required training and occupational health information to Principal Investigators.
 - Oversee compliance with the health care monitoring.
 - Maintain a master list of all health service provider dispositions of risk assessments and share the updated list on a regular basis (and no less often than each time the list is updated) with the IACUC and Animal Facilities Manager(s), as necessary.
 - 2. IACUC
 - Review research protocols and amendments to determine occupational health risks.
 - Investigate animal allergen exposures.
 - Investigate injuries and/or illnesses related to animal handling.

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

- Identify individuals who are listed on animal protocols to Animal Facilities Manager for Program Enrollment purposes.
- Confirm that protocols involving the use of biological agents or radioisotopes have sought pre-approval from specialized committees (e.g. Institutional Biosafety Committee and Radiation Safety Committee) prior to IACUC approval. Safety specialists assist with evaluating proposals or activities involving unique hazards (e.g. UV light, noise, lasers, electrical hazards, compressed gas, etc.).
- Conduct periodic facility inspections to provide ongoing hazard and risk assessment, as well as to assess the adequacy of control measures.
- Oversee compliance with the health care monitoring.

3. TCU Risk Management

- Oversee the Health Care Providers and all exposure monitoring, evaluations, and medical services needed by animal handlers based on their work-related exposures.
- Maintains records according to OSHA requirements.

4. Health Service Providers

- Review training materials annually.
- Review risk assessments to determine occupational health risks.
- Provide additional monitoring with each adverse medical incidents.
- Assist in identifying exposure control measures.
- Review assessments.
- Assess animal users who develop signs and symptoms of allergies related to animal use as needed.
- Store all records related to health assessments.

5. Safety Department

- Provide fit testing and training for respirator users and other personal protective equipment.

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

- Offer first aid training to principal investigators and lab supervisors.
- Manage and ensure compliance with all applicable OSHA requirements (20 CFR 1910 et al), including Hazard Communication Standard, and Bloodborne Pathogens standards.

6. Animal Facilities Manager

- Help to coordinate the Occupational Safety and Health Program for Animal Handlers at TCU.
- Confirm the completion of an individual's risk assessment, the completion of the medical questionnaire process (this should NOT include access to any personal medical information or the individual responses to the questionnaire that are provided directly to the Health Care Provider by the individual), and records of the completion of the training.
- Facilitate compliance of the enrollment, training, and health care monitoring requirements of this Program.
- Provide annual Program training.
- Provide animal allergen training for non-research staff.

7. TCU Hazardous Materials Safety Coordinator

- Provide recommendations for personal protective equipment (PPE).
- Check certification stickers of all chemical fumehoods and biological safety cabinets used to protect participants, during periodic audits.
- Provide safety education and oversight of chemical, radioactive, biological, and other occupational hazards.

D. Work Practice & Engineering Control Measures. Detailed work practice and engineering control measures are specified in relevant laboratory procedures and protocols. Some fundamental measures applicable to nearly all animal care and use activities are described below.

1. 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.
2. 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

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

potentially zoonotic agents. Protective equipment such as head covers, shoe covers, eye protection, hearing protection, surgical masks and respirators may be required as determined by risk assessment. Participants who use respirators must meet specific criteria, including medical clearance, respirator selection and fit testing, and training. Protective clothing and equipment is not worn beyond the boundary of animal work areas.

3. 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). The TCU Hazardous Materials Safety Coordinator tracks and manages certification of all chemical fumehoods and biological safety cabinets used to protect personnel.
- E. Work-related Injury and/or Illness Reporting. All occupational exposures, injuries, illnesses, animal bites and scratches, needle sticks, allergic reactions, accidents, etc., are to be immediately reported to the appropriate PI and the IACUC chairperson. During office hours, TCU Health Center should be notified for student injury or illness (817-257-7940). For employees, the Office of Risk Management must be notified. After hours incidents or incidents requiring immediate medical attention should be referred to the hospital emergency room. Individuals who observe conditions or work practices that pose a potential risk should notify their supervisor, the IACUC chairperson, or the Office of Research. Supervisors should communicate these observations to the IACUC for further investigation and potential mitigation.

Pregnancy and Laboratory Animal Exposure. Individuals who know or suspect they are pregnant must take special precautions when working with animals. There are certain pathogens that pose a serious health risk to the fetus and can cause birth defects. Participants who know or suspect they might be pregnant, are advised to consult with their personal health care provider to inform their personal physician/health care professional of their work with the care and use of research animals

IV. Enforcement

The Associate Provost for Research, as the Institutional Official, has ultimate responsibility for this Program. Failure to comply with this Program could result in disciplinary action, including suspension from caring for or using animals, and termination of employment.

V. Questions/Reports

If you have any questions about this Program or would like to report a potential/suspected violation, please contact the Office of Research. Reports regarding violations of this Policy may

**Occupational Health and Safety For Animal Users
Program**

be submitted anonymously by using the independent Ethics and Compliance Hotline at 1-877-888-0002.

VI. References

- [*Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals – 8th Edition*](#), National Research Council, The National Academies Press, Washington, D.C. 2011.
- [*Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals*](#), National Research Council, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C. 1997.