

HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

An individual's risk will depend on a combination of factors, including health history, type of animal, and chemical or hazard type.

- Females who are pregnant or plan on becoming pregnant should discuss work tasks with their physician. Exposure to hazardous substances or zoonotic diseases may cause harm to unborn children.
- Exposure to animal-acquired infections may cause serious health problems in individuals who are immunocompromised or immunosuppressed due to diseases such as cancer, chronic illness, and valvular heart disease, or treatment with immunosuppressive drugs.
- Many gloves used in the animal care facility are made of latex. In case of latex allergy, other glove types are available from the Area Husbandry Supervisor.
- Smoking, eating, drinking, and applying cosmetics are prohibited in animal care facilities and when working around animals.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

It is important to read all posted signage to ensure that you are following the proper procedures for protecting both yourself and the animals.

- **Plan Ahead.** Contact the Area Husbandry Supervisor before entering any facility to receive proper safety instructions. If you are aware of personal health conditions, such as allergies, which may prohibit you from working in an animal facility, inform your direct supervisor.

- **Wear proper personal attire while in animal facilities.** Proper attire completely covers the torso, legs, and feet. Long hair should be pulled back.
- **Dress in appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).** Signage located throughout the facility will direct you to the required PPE (e.g., gloves, gowns, respiratory protection) for that area. Proper PPE should be worn as directed by room entry signs and before handling cages and/or animals. PPE should be properly disposed of before leaving the facility to avoid contaminating public spaces.
- **Be mindful of personal hygiene.** Personal hygiene while in animal facilities includes not touching your face with gloved or unwashed hands. Always wash your hands after leaving the facility.

Most importantly, be careful and alert in your surroundings, and report any concerns directly to your supervisor.

NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE?

The University of Michigan is committed to maintaining a safe and secure workplace for all individuals.

Questions or concerns about occupational health incidents that occur while in our animal care facilities should be directed to EHS at (734) 647-1143 or ehs-animalsafety@umich.edu.

If an incident requiring medical treatment occurs, please contact your direct supervisor and proceed to the nearest emergency room for immediate medical attention.



Working Around Animals for the First Time?

What You Should Know About Occupational Hazards & Safety Concerns Associated with Animal Care Facilities



ANIMAL CARE & USE PROGRAM
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Animal Care & Use Office
(734) 763-8028

acuoffice@umich.edu
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INTRODUCTION

As part of its research and teaching mission, the University of Michigan is actively involved in working with animals. In performing your assigned duties, you may at times come in contact with animals or their environment. Although minimal, there are some hazards that you should be aware of when working in areas where animals are being housed and maintained.

This brochure is designed to acquaint you with the risks associated with these facilities. Please note that this brochure does not supply you with all of the information needed to completely assess the occupational risks associated with animal care and use. Rather, it is a brief summary of some of the hazards you may encounter along with some important health and safety tips to minimize any occupational risks.

For a more thorough discussion of the hazards found in animal care facilities, as well as the appropriate safety precautions and methods of control, you should consult with the Department of Environment, Health & Safety (EHS) at the University of Michigan.

REPORTING ANIMAL CONCERNS

The University of Michigan is strongly committed to the humane care and use of animals in research, testing, and teaching.

If you have any concerns regarding the welfare of animals, please contact the Animal Care & Use Office at acuoffice@umich.edu or (734) 763-8028.

Anonymous concerns may also be submitted online at animalcare.umich.edu/hotline.

ANIMAL-RELATED HAZARDS

The types of hazards associated with animal research are varied. **Specific animal-related hazards to be aware of include:**

- **Allergies.** Although allergies may only affect a small percentage of individuals, allergic reactions (including respiratory and skin disorders; eye, nose, and throat irritation; and skin hives) are among the most common and most important of the occupational hazards associated with the care and use of laboratory animals. If you begin to experience any “cold-like” symptoms or rashes when you enter an animal area, this may suggest some type of allergic reaction that should be reported to your supervisor.
- **Bites, Scratches, & Related Hazards.** It is critical that you are aware of factors or situations that might precede a traumatic event in a research animal, such as high-pitched noises, quick movements, and inappropriate handling. Remember, even though an animal bite may appear inconsequential, individuals who have sustained an animal bite should seek medical attention to avoid any potential complications.
- **Zoonotic Diseases** are diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans. Although the risk of acquiring infections from laboratory animals is low, many zoonotic diseases can be serious. In order to minimize your risk of contracting a zoonotic disease, it is crucial that you follow all posted safety procedures, wear any prescribed protective equipment, and report any exposure incidents.

- **Toxic Chemicals & Hazardous Drugs.** Animal facilities frequently employ large quantities of chemical disinfectants and cleaners. Although usually safe in their diluted form, handling of concentrated chemicals often requires special handling procedures. Consult the Safety Data Sheet for proper handling of such substances.
- **Physical Hazards** may include:
 - **Traumatic injuries**, such as being stepped on, kicked, or pinned against something by a large animal.
 - **Accidental needle stick/puncture.** Needles, syringes, pipettes, and scalpels are commonly used in animal facilities. Sharps disposal containers are located throughout the facility and should only be handled by trained staff.
 - **Electrical hazards** are found throughout animal facilities, which can frequently be wet (e.g., cage washing) areas. Equipment that has frayed or damaged should NOT be used, and electrical cord splices/repairs made with electrical tape are not acceptable.
- **Chemical Hazards, Infectious Agents, & Biological Hazards.** Animals exposed to potentially infectious microorganisms are housed in specialized areas. Additional housing requirements, entry precautions, and signage will be used to identify these areas.