
Valdosta State University Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee

Standard Operating Procedure Number 010

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PLAN

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to ensure the safety and health of Valdosta State University (VSU) employees and students who participate in animal activity. It sets forth requirements for compliance, health screening and immunization, training, response to bites and other injuries, and reporting and record keeping.

REFERENCE: Bowman, Phil J., *A Flexible Occupational Health and Safety Program for Laboratory Animal Care and Use Programs*, AALAS Bulletin, Vol. 30, No. 6, November 1991, pps. 15-17.

INSTITUTIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH PROGRAM: VSU employees who are involved in animal activity are included in, and expected to comply with, the larger institutional Occupational Safety and Health Program (OSHP) managed by the Office of Environmental and Occupational Safety (OEOS). VSU's OSHP is designed to provide a continuing and comprehensive accident prevention plan to assure a safe and healthful environment for all students, faculty members, employees, and visitors. The objective is to prevent injury, loss of life, and loss of property by identifying and eliminating hazards, establishing safe practices, and promoting safe performance of all University activities. The safety program advances compliance with the safety regulations enacted by the Georgia Department of Labor, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, and the University System of Georgia and with Life Safety Codes, Centers for Disease Control regulations, and other recognized codes and standards. The program applies to all persons who occupy space at Valdosta State University. Responsibility for enforcement of the OSHP rests with the OEOS. Administrative units, including academic departments, research laboratories, and the animal care and use program, are expected to assist in plan implementation by promoting adherence to plan provisions and providing appropriate training for, and monitoring of, their personnel.

ADDITIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR PERSONS USING ANIMALS: The IACUC has mandated additional occupational safety and health protections for personnel working in laboratory animal facilities and for other personnel with significant animal contact. This program is based on recommendations of Bowman (1991) and applies to the following:

- ♦ Personnel who are involved in the direct care of animals or their quarters (i.e., animal care personnel and the Attending Veterinarian);
- ♦ Personnel who have substantial direct contact with live animals (defined as more than eight hours per week on a regular basis throughout a three-month period); and
- ♦ Students employed on research projects that involve use of vertebrate animals outside VSU's facilities (i.e., in the field).

The Animal Use Protocol (AUP) requires research investigators and teaching faculty using animals to note any health or safety risks that might be present and to describe the training that employees/students will have or will be given. If, during the AUP review, the IACUC has concerns about health and safety of personnel involved in an animal protocol that are not adequately addressed, the IACUC will, prior to approving the AUP, consult with the campus Environmental and Occupational Safety director and will determine, on a case-by-case basis, what additional protections and/or surveillance should be required.

CATEGORIES OF RISK: Categories of risk and appropriate services recognized by the IACUC are those recommended by Bowman and modified by the IACUC to more closely address VSU's animal care and use program. They are as follows:

A. Risk Category 1: Small animal contact (e.g., rodents, rabbits, birds) and small endothermic ("warm-blooded") vertebrate field species (excluding marine species)

Required Services for Risk Category 1:

- ◆ For individuals who work with endothermic ("warm-blooded") animals, a physical examination or health screening by a physician or nurse practitioner at initial hire and annually thereafter; service to include discussion of allergy and immunologic health status and risk issues
- ◆ Current tetanus immunization is required for individuals who work with both endothermic and ectothermic ("cold-blooded") vertebrates
- ◆ Individuals with severe allergies, asthma, a compromised immune system, or any other significant health issue are strongly encouraged to seek advice from their health care provider prior to contact with any animal species

B. Risk Category 2: Large animal contact (e.g., cats, dogs, sheep, cattle, etc.) and large vertebrate field species (excluding marine species)

Required Services for Risk Category 2:

- ◆ Physical examination or health screening by a physician or nurse practitioner at initial hire and annually thereafter
- ◆ Current tetanus immunization
- ◆ Tuberculin skin test (at the initial physical examination for those persons without a previous history of a reactive test and as medically indicated for those with known or suspected exposure)
- ◆ Chest radiography as needed (for individual having a positive reaction to the tuberculin skin test or with a history of a reactive tuberculin test but who have not had a chest x-ray during the previous year; or as directed by a physician as a result of the tuberculin skin testing)
- ◆ Prophylactic rabies immunization if the individual works directly with the rabies virus, the individual has direct contact with animals quarantined for rabies surveillance, the individual is exposed to animals or animal parts potentially infected by rabies virus, or the individual is responsible for controlling wild animals
- ◆ Serum banking if directed by the physician in accordance with recommendations by Bowman
- ◆ Antibody titer for women of child-bearing potential (ages 15-50) exposed to *Toxoplasma* sp. or cats and their feces
- ◆ Any other protections collaboratively determined as needed or advisable by the investigator, the physician, VSU's Environmental and Occupational Safety

director, and the IACUC (particularly for individuals with potential exposure to Q fever)

C. Risk Category 3: Nonhuman primates

Required Services for Risk Category 3:

- ◆ Physical examination or health screening by a physician or nurse practitioner at initial hire and annually thereafter
- ◆ Current tetanus immunization
- ◆ Tuberculin skin test at the initial physical examination for those persons without a previous history of a reactive test and thereafter every six months
- ◆ Chest radiography as needed (for individual having a positive reaction to the tuberculin skin test or with a history of a reactive tuberculin test but who have not had a chest x-ray during the previous year; or as directed by a physician as a result of the tuberculin skin testing)
- ◆ Prophylactic rabies immunization if the individual works directly with the rabies virus, the individual has direct contact with animals quarantined for rabies surveillance, the individual is exposed to animals or animal parts potentially infected by rabies virus, or the individual is responsible for controlling wild animals
- ◆ Serum banking if directed by the physician in accordance with recommendations by Bowman
- ◆ Any other protections collaboratively determined as needed or advisable by the investigator, the physician, VSU's Environmental and Occupational Safety director, and the IACUC

REQUIREMENTS FOR BIOSAFETY LEVEL 2 WORK: In the event that a researcher desires to use and/or house animals that are experimentally infected with microorganisms that carry a substantial risk for transmission to humans (research requiring Animal Biosafety Level 2), special training, immunizations against diseases other than tetanus, and zoonoses monitoring will be required. The researcher must apply for approval from both the IACUC and the Biosafety Committee. An occupational safety and health program specific to the proposed protocol must be designed and implemented before the investigator receives approval from the IACUC to begin the animal activity. Investigator training from an outside source may be required. (Note: Research requiring containment above Biosafety Level 2 is not permitted by the IACUC in University animal facilities.)

HEALTH SCREENING AND IMMUNIZATION SERVICES AND CERTIFICATION: Full-time VSU employees, the Attending Veterinarian, faculty who has substantial direct contact with live animals, and other faculty determined by the IACUC to be at risk may obtain health screenings and immunizations from their private physician. VSU provides an option for health insurance for all 0.5 FTE and greater permanent and some grant-funded employees that may be used to defray the costs of screenings and immunizations.

Health screening services are available to student employees through Farber Health Services at no cost. Immunizations are available through Farber Health Services, although there is a fee for some immunizations. Students may, however, elect to see their own physician at their own expense.

Personnel for whom health screening and immunization is required must submit to the IACUC

an IACUC health screening and immunization certification signed by the physician or nurse practitioner rendering the services prior to beginning the animal activity for which the services were required.

OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH TRAINING: The Investigator is responsible for providing training for all staff employed in VSU's animal facilities or for obtaining training for them. No one is permitted to work in animal facilities until training has been completed. In addition to the job-specific training, all staff working in the facility must also complete the online Bloodborne Pathogen training provided by the University System of Georgia. The Office of Environmental and Occupational Safety will serve as a resource to assist in training and to evaluate health protection and safety procedures. Personnel will be provided with, and will be required to use, appropriate protective gear and safety equipment. Failure of employees to comply with health and safety requirements is grounds for termination of employment.

Faculty who work with live vertebrate animals are expected to be knowledgeable of health and safety issues related to the specific nature of their work. Upon request or requirement of the IACUC, faculty members may receive additional training from the VSU's Environmental and Occupational Safety Office.

Teaching faculty are responsible for training students in safe animal handling and use practices. Faculty members conducting animal research, including field research, are responsible for providing occupational safety and health training to student research assistants related to the specific research activity. This includes instruction about potential hazards and risks, safe handling of the animals, safe handling of hazardous agents, personal hygiene and personal protection practices, special precautions in the event of allergy, pregnancy, or illness, and emergency procedures.

All training must be documented and records must be made available to the IACUC and the Office of Environmental and Occupational Safety upon request.

RESPONSE PROCEDURES FOR BITE WOUNDS AND OTHER INJURIES: When an employee or student incurs a bite wound or other injury or is exposed to potentially hazardous animal fluids while working with animals in VSU's animal facilities, he/she is required to immediately report to Farber Health Services for first aid, to the Valdosta Family Medicine walk-in clinic (2412 North Oak Street, Valdosta; 229-244-1400) for treatment, or to the South Georgia Medical Center emergency room (2501 North Patterson Street, Valdosta; 229-333-1000) for emergency or after-hours care. In the event of injury in the field, the employee or student should report to the nearest hospital emergency room for treatment. Immediately thereafter, if not done already, he/she is required to report the incident to the IACUC Administrator, the principal investigator/supervisor/faculty advisor, the Office of Environmental and Occupational Safety, and (if an employee) the Office of Human Resources for assistance with a Workers Compensation claim.

RECORD KEEPING: Each administrative unit is required to keep records of individual work assignments, bite wounds, other injuries, and/or unusual illnesses experienced by employees of that unit or students who participate in animal activity. These records must be available to the IACUC upon request. Any significant problems noted by the administrative unit must be reported in writing to the IACUC and the Vice President for Academic Affairs (Institutional Official).