ANIMAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH RESEARCH ANIMAL EXPOSURE

UC RIVERSIDE
Environmental Health
Safety and Risk Management

INTRODUCTION



Many research programs at UC Riverside (UCR) use animals to study behavior, disease processes and treatments, and to better understand immunological and microbial interactions. The majority of animals at UCR are rodents, but other research animals may be present including birds, fish, chickens, snakes, and other vertebrates.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

- The most common risk is development or worsening of **allergies** to animals or **occupational asthma** as a result of exposure to animal allergens.
- Transmission of infectious diseases from an animal to a human (zoonosis).
- Individuals who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant and those with a compromised immune system may be at increased risk if they are exposed to infectious agents.

WHAT IS THE ANIMAL OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM (AOHP)?

UCR's AOHP is administered by EHSRM Occupational Health in coordination with the Office of Research Compliance, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and the Office of the Campus Veterinarian.

The program includes initial enrollment and general education for personnel with direct contact to research animals, health history screening, routine and special immunizations, health surveillance, and, if necessary, enrollment in the Respiratory Protection Program.

WHO MUST ENROLL AND PARTICIPATE IN THE AOHP?

All faculty, staff, students, and affiliates whose duties involve direct, casual, or reasonably anticipated exposure to animal allergens, bedding, waste, cages, contaminated equipment, aerosols, or other animal-associated hazards must complete full AOHP enrollment.

HOW TO ENROLL AND PARTICIPATE IN THE AOHP?

1. Full AOHP Enrollment

Individuals requiring full AOHP enrollment are identified by assigned duties, job responsibilities, anticipated exposures, or inclusion on an IACUC-reviewed Animal Use Protocol.

Enrollment is completed via the Occupational Health Surveillance System (OHSS), which includes:

- **Risk Assessment:** The Principal Investigator (PI) describes the individual's duties, species, procedures, hazardous agents, exposure level, and required controls.
- **Health Questionnaire:** The participant completes a confidential questionnaire for review by a UC Irvine COEH occupational medicine physician.
- **Medical Clearance:** The physician establishes clearance status, required or recommended services, functional restrictions, and the next review date.

Participants must obtain medical clearance before beginning covered animal work. Services recommended by the physician may be declined unless determined necessary for clearance or safety.

2. Reassessment Triggers

Participants must submit an early reassessment whenever a significant change occurs, including:

- **Health Changes:** Pregnancy, worsening allergies, asthma, illness, or immunodeficiency.
- **Workplace Changes:** Changes in assigned duties, animal species, procedures, hazardous agents, location, or exposure levels.

3. Non-Contact & Visitor Access

- **Non-Contact Personnel:** Individuals who enter animal-use areas solely to perform non-animal duties—and do **not** handle animals, specimens, bedding, waste, cages, contaminated equipment, or research materials—are **exempt from full AOHP enrollment**. Instead, they complete the **UCR Non-Contact Animal Exposure Acknowledgment form**. Full AOHP enrollment must be reassessed if their duties, access, or anticipated exposure changes.
- **Escorted Visitors:** Continuously supervised visitors, including vendors, are managed under applicable facility visitor procedures.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For assistance with Animal Use Protocols, amendments, training requirements, and animal use activities:
iacuc@ucr.edu
951-827-4813

For assistance with immunizations and Health Questionnaire issues:
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For assistance with respiratory protection:
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