New Mexico State University
Research Integrity & Compliance
Institutional Animal Care and Use Program
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OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM FOR ANIMAL WORKERS
PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS

I. Purpose and Regulatory Compliance Requirements

The purpose of an occupational health and safety program (OHSP) for animal workers at New Mexico State University is to minimize the risks of injury or illness that may be associated with use of vertebrate animals in research, teaching, and service, consistent with an overall goal of maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. NMSU is required by United States Public Health Service (PHS) regulations to have an OHSP for employees, students, and visitors who work in NMSU animal facilities or have significant contact with vertebrate animals.

Requirements and recommendations relating to OHSP for animal workers are included in the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (NRC, 1996), the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Agricultural Research and Teaching* (FASS, 1999), and *Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals* (NRC, 1997). A description of the OHSP must be included in the NMSU Assurance of Compliance with the PHS. The OHSP for animal workers at NMSU is a coordinated effort of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the office of Research Integrity & Compliance, specialists in Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management (EHS&RM), and the Aggie Health & Wellness Center. In addition, the Radiation Safety Committee and the Institutional Biosafety Committee may become involved in activities using radioactive materials or Biosafety Level containment.

II. Participation

Individuals involved in the direct care and (or) use of animals in research and IACUC-approved protocols (including faculty, staff, students, visiting researchers, and part-time employees) are required to participate by completing safety training as directed by the principal investigator, providing information for the OHSP hazard assessment, and communicating with program coordinators about recommended vaccinations or other risk-based health & safety services.

Personnel who do not directly work with animals but who frequently work in the animal facilities (including maintenance personnel, custodial services, EHS&RM staff, members of the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee and administrators) will participate in safety training and use personal protective equipment as specified by the animal facility director based on a hazard assessment for the activities. Vaccinations and medical services will be offered based on the hazard assessment and in consultation with EHS&RM and the employee's supervisor.

III. Program Support

Office of the Vice President for Research (VPR)

The Vice President for Research (VPR) is the Institutional Official for the NMSU Institutional Animal Care and Use Program. Research Integrity & Compliance assures that NMSU remains in compliance with federal regulations for research animal activities, and the IACUC oversees animal

care at all NMSU facilities. The NMSU administration provides the resources to support essential elements of the OHSP for animal workers, including funds to support EHS&RM as well as funds to support medical costs associated with participants in research operations.

Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

All teaching and research activities involving vertebrate animals conducted at NMSU facilities or by NMSU personnel must be approved by the IACUC. The OHSP for animal workers is a component of the animal care and use program and is, therefore, included in the semiannual program reviews conducted by the IACUC. Faculty, staff, and students listed on IACUC protocol applications must have completed the requirements of the OHSP for Animal Workers before an IACUC protocol will be approved.

Principal Investigators (PI) and Supervisors

Supervisors and PIs are responsible for providing workers with safety information specific to the work environment which will allow personnel to perform their job in a safe manner. Animal workers must know how to recognize potential hazards, how to protect themselves and coworkers from hazards, and how to react properly in case of an emergency. It is very important that all personnel are "safety conscious."

Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management

Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management (EHS&RM) provides instruction in safety for animal workers, hazard communication, chemical hygiene/laboratory safety, hazardous waste management, radiation safety, biosafety awareness, blood borne pathogens, lifting safety, respiratory protection and fit testing, ladder safety, and several other topics. Animal workers must complete training classes that are required by NMSU policy as well as those appropriate for their job activities as identified by the supervisor of the animal work and the OHSP coordinators. The IACUC and EHS&RM work closely together to ensure that requirements of the OHSP for Animal Workers are effective and in compliance with regulatory mandates.

Aggie Health & Wellness Center

Aggie Health & Wellness Center, located on the main campus of NMSU, provides vaccinations based on the hazard assessment for animal workplace and individual health considerations. Aggie Health & Wellness is also the initial contact point when an employee, student, or associated personnel is injured while performing job-related activities.

Principal investigators and supervisors at NMSU locations other than main campus will arrange services for immunizations and medical needs through a local health care provider.

Biosafety and Radiation Safety Committees

The use of biological, chemical, and radioactive materials poses hazards to personnel. Use of these materials must be approved by the appropriate committee and all personnel must be trained accordingly.

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

All vertebrate animal research programs are required to have an OHSP for personnel that have contact with animals, their tissues, or their allergens. This section describes the components of the NMSU-OHSP for Animal Workers.

I. Training Requirements

A. IACUC Certification of Animal Welfare Training – All animal workers must be certified by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee. This requirement is met by completing the on-line training program for IACUC Certification, accessed at www.citiprogram.org.

B. Occupational Health and Safety Program for Animal Workers – Program Overview and Requirements - This document describes the OHSP for Animal Workers. All animal workers must complete the OHSP assessment forms to communicate with the OHSP coordinators for appropriate vaccinations and safety-related services.

C. Occupational Health and Safety Program for Animal Workers – Animal Worker Safety Training – All NMSU employees and students who work with animals must complete safety training through the EHS&RM class or alternate equivalent courses approved by IACUC.

D. Employee Safety and Hazard Communication Training – All NMSU employees who work with animals must complete these EHS&RM courses.

E. Biosafety Awareness Training – Employees and students working directly with hazardous biological agents and/or in Biosafety Level 2 laboratories must complete this EHS&RM class.

F. OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Training – This EHS&RM class is required for all employees and students who have routine exposure to human blood or body fluids, unfixed tissues, or animals/lab materials that contain blood-borne infectious agents such as HIV or hepatitis virus.

G. Radiation Safety – All radiation permittees and users must complete this EHS&RM class.

H. Respiratory Protection and Fit Testing - If a respirator is required, animal workers must complete this class through EHS&RM and obtain fit testing annually.

II. Risk Assessment/Medical Questionnaire

All OHSP participants must complete the Health Questionnaire. The completed form is confidential and is used only by the NMSU-OHSP coordinator(s) to provide the participant with guidance for workplace safety and health concerns. The OHSP coordinator will not transmit protected health information to non-NMSU entities. Participants may indicate on the Health Questionnaire form if they wish to discuss a relevant medical condition before beginning work with animals, to be directed to occupational health services or a personal healthcare provider for a confidential consultation.

After reviewing the forms, the OHSP coordinator will notify the participant of follow-up actions based on the work-related risk assessment. Individuals are responsible for communicating with the OHSP coordinator to obtain clearance to begin animal related activities. Individuals may decline OHSP recommendations. In some cases, declination may result in the individual being reassigned to less hazardous work duties, in accordance with NMSU policies and upon agreement between the individual, the faculty advisor, and OHSP administrators.

ANIMAL WORKER HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUCTIONS

1. Please read the document titled **"OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM FOR ANIMAL WORKERS - PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS"** and sign the OHSP Participant Acknowledgement sheet.

2. The following items are recommended and offered based on the animal work hazard assessment:

   Tetanus Immunization within 10 years – All individuals having regular contact with animals or if a tetanus-prone injury occurs when more than 5 years have elapsed since the last immunization.

   Rabies Immunization/titer within 2 years – All individuals in contact with mammals associated with rabies in NM such as bats, foxes, skunks, and coyotes, and as recommended by current guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention.

   Respirator Fit Testing – All individuals working with respiratory hazards that require use of a respirator (supervisor should contact Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management for guidance and assessment) and individuals who should to wear a respirator as determined by a physician for a medical need such as asthma or allergies to animals or bedding materials.

   Hearing Conservation Program – Individuals who may be subjected to noise exposure exceeding 85 decibels on a regular basis (communication within 2 feet requires shouting) must contact Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management for sound level evaluation.

3. **Individuals who are immunocompromised** (due to treatment of certain diseases such as cancer, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, chronic viral illness, or as a result of splenectomy) may have special safety needs. These persons should discuss their condition and work activities with their personal physician, and communicate as appropriate with their supervisor and OHSP coordinators.

4. **Female Personnel**: Pregnant women involved in the animal care and use program may need to take special precautions during pregnancy because of risks associated with animals, biohazardous materials, radiation, or chemical agents. Pregnant women should discuss their condition and work activities with their personal physician, and communicate as appropriate with their supervisor and OHSP coordinators.

5. The completed Workplace / Health Questionnaire will be considered confidential and used only by the NMSU compliance personnel for the purposes of this Occupational Health and Safety Program to provide the participant and supervisor with guidance for workplace safety. Health-related information that the individual provides on this form will not be transferred to any non-NMSU entity.

6. Return the completed form to ***NMSU Research Integrity & Compliance, MSC 3RES, New Mexico State University, P. O. Box 30001, Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001.***

7. The OHSP coordinator will inform the IACUC Chair when the recommended procedures have been completed or when the individual has signed a waiver declining participation in the recommended procedures. Individuals become eligible to begin animal related activities only after these steps have been completed.

8. For questions or more information, contact the OHSP coordinator by phone at (575) 646-4463 or by email to biosafe@nmsu.edu.