



Hazards Associated with Animals

The information below only provides an overview

**Be proactive in your safety - if you have questions or need more information:
Ask your supervisor or instructor!**

Questions? email compliance@uwyo.edu or uwehs@uwyo.edu

Hazards

People working with or in areas where animals are housed are exposed to a variety of hazards, including:

- **Physical hazards** caused by animals (bites, scratches, kicks), medical equipment (surgical lasers, x-ray equipment, sharps, autoclaves), or general work conditions (slippery floors, unsafe ladder use, driving to worksites).
- **Ergonomics-related hazards** that include heavy or awkward lifting and awkward postures.
- **Chemical hazards** due to exposure to disinfectants, anesthetic gases, hazardous drugs, insecticides, surgical smoke, latex gloves, and agricultural dust.
- **Allergies** caused by animals are a significant hazard. Allergies can be caused by fur, dander, saliva or urine.
 - The following links can provide additional information related to animal allergies and prevention:
 - [Niosh Alert: "Preventing Asthma in Animal Handlers"](#)
- **Disease-causing organisms** transmitted by needlesticks, animal bites or scratches, direct contact with contaminated items and waste, and inhalation.
 - Zoonoses are diseases of animals that are transmissible to humans and can be life-threatening to humans. Field research with wild species remains an important source of exposure to zoonotic agents.
 - If you are exposed through a bite, scratch, needle stick, aerosol droplet, mucosal secretion, feces or urine, there is the potential for you to become infected.
 - Prevention of exposure requires knowledge of the zoonoses that may be found in the animal in which you will be working. In some cases, vaccines may be available to reduce your risks. Contact CSU Occupational Health for more information (491-3102).
 - The following links can provide additional information related to disease and/or the specific animals you work with:
 - [Diseases and Resources Listed by Animal Species](#)
 - [List of Zoonotic Diseases](#)

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Prevention

- **Learn and follow safe work practices**
- **Use good personal hygiene – WASH YOUR HANDS!**
 - The most common way to contract a zoonotic or lab-acquired infection is by accidentally placing the infectious material in your mouth or on your mucous membranes. Frequent and thorough hand washing is the best way to stop infection. The sooner you wash your hands after exposure, the less likely you are to spread infection.
 - **When to wash your hands:**
 - Always wash your hands before and after eating, drinking, smoking or using the restroom.
 - After working with animals.
 - After touching an object or surface that is or may be contaminated.
 - Wash as soon as you remove your gloves or other personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - **How to wash your hands**
 - Carefully remove gloves and other PPE, making sure to avoid skin contact with potentially contaminated glove surfaces.
 - Turn on water. Wet your hands and use plenty of soap. Work up a good lather. Don't just wipe – rub well.
 - Wash your whole hand, under your nails, between your fingers, and up your wrists. Wash for at least 20 seconds out of the stream of water.
 - Rinse your hands well. Let the water run off your fingertips, not your wrists.
 - Use clean paper towels to dry your hands well. Use paper towels to turn off the faucet and open the door so you don't contaminate your hands.
- **Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**
 - PPE helps ensure that you won't bring potentially contaminated material home with you.
 - Examples of protective clothing are lab coat; gowns, scrubs, gloves, face shields, masks, and respirators.
 - Always use PPE where required and make sure that you have been trained for proper use.

Exposures and Illnesses

You may be at increased risk for illness or injury if you have certain health conditions, are pregnant, or immune compromised (e.g. taking steroids like prednisone on a regular basis, diabetic, infected with HIV, etc.). If you have questions or concerns about your health status or risks that you will be exposed to, you should make an appointment with your health care provider.

Report accidents, exposures, or animal related illnesses to your Supervisor or Instructor promptly!

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