

	SOP: Laboratory Animal Bites and Scratches Policy
	Reference : USA OHP Manual <a href="http://www.southalabama.edu/com/research/animalcare.shtml">http://www.southalabama.edu/com/research/animalcare.shtml</a>

## INFORMATION GUIDE

All animals are capable of inflicting bites and scratches. Small animals, such as mice, gerbils, hamsters, rats, guinea pigs and rabbits usually deliver relatively minor wounds. Larger species like cats, dogs and nonhuman primates are capable of inflicting severe wounds. Bites and scratches can expose laboratory personnel, animal technicians and others working with animals to potential hazards transmitted through contaminated saliva, secretions or blood. These injuries are largely preventable through proper training in animal handling techniques.

Zoonoses are diseases of animals that are transmissible to humans. Although not likely, there remain zoonotic agents associated with laboratory animals, some which can be life-threatening. Prevention of exposure to these animal-related illnesses requires knowledge of the zoonoses related to the animals with which you will be working. If you are exposed through bite, scratch, aerosol droplet, mucosal secretion, feces or urine, there is the potential for you to become infected, and medical consultation through the USA Student Health Clinic is recommended. This clinic serves as the medical care provider for the USA Occupational Health Program for those working with animals in University facilities.

In addition, personnel should maintain current tetanus immunizations, seek prompt medical review of wounds, and initiate veterinary evaluation of the animal involved through the Department of Comparative Medicine, if warranted. Rabies, Herpes B-virus infection, Hantavirus infection, cat-scratch fever, tularemia, and rat-bite fever are among the specific diseases that can be transmitted by animal bites.

### ***BITE and SCRATCH PREVENTION***

In the research laboratory or animal holding facility one of the most important things you can do to prevent bites and scratches is to learn the correct methods of handling the species that you intend to work with. Protective equipment, such as gloves and long-sleeved laboratory coats limit injury to the hands and arms. Leather gloves afford additional protection if necessary. Appropriate restraining devices should be used when deemed necessary. You can contact a member of the veterinary staff of the Department of Comparative Medicine (460-6239) for guidance.

### ***FIRST AID for ANIMAL BITES and SCRATCHES***

1. As soon as possible wash the wound with plenty of soap (preferably antiseptic soap, such as chlorhexidene-Nolvasan® or Betadine®-povidone iodine) and water for at least 15 minutes.
2. If wound is bleeding, cover with sterile gauze, non-sterile gauze or a paper towel. Sterile gauze is preferred.
3. Notify your supervisor.
4. Depending on the severity of the wound, seek medical treatment: proceed to the Student Health Services Clinic (TRP III Suite 1200, phone 460-7151). Weekends and after business hours, proceed to the USA Medical Center Emergency Department.
5. Reference the Occupational Health booklet for additional instructions on animal related injuries and illnesses (<http://www.southalabama.edu/com/research/ohp.shtml> under Training).
6. As soon as possible, complete a "First Report of Injury" form available from your supervisor or the Office of Comparative Medicine.

If you are bitten by a cat or dog, please notify the **Department of Comparative Medicine** at **460-6239**. A veterinarian will examine the animal(s) and establish appropriate follow-up measures. **NOTE:** Macaque primate users must proceed immediately to the Bite Wound Station in MSB 961 in addition to contacting the Occupational Health Program.

## ZOONOTIC INFORMATION

### ***LABORATORY MICE and RATS***

Modern laboratory mice are bred to exclude all zoonotic agents. Therefore, there is limited concern for disease from these research mice. There is, however, always concern about secondary infections that can occur with bites and scratches. Common skin, intestinal, and soil bacteria present on you or the animal can infect the scratch or bite wound and cause these secondary infections. Thus, handle all mice with care, always perform first aid (see Page 1), and seek medical consultation for severe wounds that appear to be infected.

Historically, rats have been known to carry a bacterium that causes Rat-Bite Fever. However, these bacteria have not been found in laboratory rats for decades due to the special efforts of commercial suppliers to eliminate the bacteria from breeding colonies.

### ***RABBITS***

Modern laboratory rabbits contain few infectious pathogens. Of concern are scratches that can be inflicted with their strong hind legs and sharp claws or from bites. Secondary infection with common bacteria can result. Perform the first aid procedures (see Page 1) as needed and seek medical consultation for severe or infected wounds.

### ***DOGS or CATS***

Rabies vaccination is available to personnel who handle dogs and cats, if desired. Personnel who work with cats and believe that they are pregnant should notify the Occupational Health Physician (460-7151) for counseling regarding precautions to prevent Toxoplasmosis. Toxoplasmosis can cause severe disease in unborn babies.

Cat scratch disease is a zoonotic infection characterized by illness that follows a scratch from a cat. Although the prognosis is usually excellent, an examination by a physician is recommended. Other diseases with zoonotic potential include ringworm (fungus), sarcoptic mange, and visceral larval migrans from roundworms.

### ***PIGS***

Bites from pigs present a risk similar to that from a dog or cat. First aid procedures from Page 1 should be followed and the Occupational Health Physician (460-7151) should be consulted.

### ***OLD WORLD PRIMATES (Macaques)***

Refer to the First Aid for Old World Monkey Bites or Splashes listed in Appendix 7 in the Occupational Health Booklet. Follow instructions in "bite kits" located in the Bite Wound Station located in MSB 961 to prevent infection with cercopithecine herpesvirus I (B virus). These first aid procedures outline specific treatment and reporting requirements. ALWAYS SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION for ***nonhuman primate bites (MACAQUE ONLY), scratches or exposure of mucous membranes to primate body fluids***. The Occupational Health Physician should be contacted immediately at 460-7151 for medical assessment and treatment.

### ***NEW WORLD PRIMATES (e.g., Squirrel Monkeys, Owl Monkeys)***

Bites and scratches are the most common occupational health risks associated with nonhuman primate work. Treatment for New World primate bites and scratches depends on the nature of the injury. First aid procedures from Page 1 should be followed and the Occupational Health Physician (460-7151) should be consulted.