

**University of Tennessee Health Science Center –  
Laboratory Animal Care Unit**

**Standard Operating Procedure for Animal Bites and Scratches  
and Other Animal-Related Injuries**

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe how to treat animal related injuries. This SOP is intended for use by all personnel who handle animals, or materials that come into contact with animal bodily fluids or tissues. This SOP is approved by the UTHSC Laboratory Animal Care Unit (LACU).

Information on reporting of work-related injuries can be found on the UTHSC Human Resources website: [https://www.uthsc.edu/hr/benefits/workers\\_compensation.php](https://www.uthsc.edu/hr/benefits/workers_compensation.php)  
All animal related injuries must be reported to your supervisor. You must then contact the CorVel nurse triage line at 1-866-245-8588 to report the injury and to be directed for any medical care if needed. If you have any animal-related injury that you feel is an emergency, call UTHSC Campus Police at 448-4444 for immediate assistance.

An animal bite or exposure is defined as having one's skin pierced or abraded by animal's teeth or claws, or by animal saliva or tissue coming in contact with abraded skin, eyes, or mucus membranes. Bites and scratches are not merely a concern of physical injury, but there is also the potential of contracting zoonotic disease or allergic reactions.

**Bite and Scratch Prevention**

- \* Species-specific animal handling techniques are taught by the Laboratory Animal Care Unit veterinary staff and the animal facility management staff.
- \* If possible, direct handling of wild animals or any animals suspected of being infected should be avoided by using tongs, bite gloves, squeeze cages, shields, or other protective equipment.
- \* Animals known to be aggressive should always be handled by a minimum of two people.

**Bite and Scratch Treatment**

- \* A First-Aid kit must be located in an obvious, readily available location in all work areas
- \* The facility manager or their designee is responsible for maintaining the first-aid kit and checking the contents expiration dates.
- \* Contents must include:
  - Surgical scrubs impregnated with antiseptic soap
  - Sterile gauze pads
  - Adhesive tape
  - Band-aids
  - Topical antibiotic ointment

**For minor injuries involving rodent bites:**

- Let the wound slightly bleed under running water and gently scrub with a surgical sponge and antiseptic soap. Wash the wound until visible dirt and debris are gone.
- Apply gauze and firm pressure to control bleeding. Apply a band-aid if the wound is superficial and not bleeding.

- Thoroughly rinse exposed mucous membranes under running water or by using the eye wash station
- Notify your supervisor so he/she can assess the wound and determine if a physician should be consulted
- Contact the CorVel nurse triage line at 1-866-245-8588 to report the injury and to be directed for any medical care if needed.

#### **For dog bites:**

- If you are bitten by a laboratory dog, clean the wound under running water and gently scrub with a surgical sponge and antiseptic soap for at least 15 minutes. Wash the wound until visible dirt and debris are gone
- Immediately notify your supervisor and contact the CorVel nurse triage line at 1-866-245-8588 to report the injury and to be directed for any medical care if needed. Report in person to Ms. Evelyn Lewis at University Health Services, 910 Madison Ave, Suite 922 (448-5630) to be examined and treated by a physician
- University Health Services will notify the Department of Health of the dog bite and that department will examine the incident and the dog's health history and determine the required action.
- The LACU maintains health records and vaccination histories for all dogs maintained on campus

#### **For injuries involving ABSL2/ABSL3 animals:**

- If you are bitten or wounded by an animal under ABSL2/ABSL3 containment that has been treated with an infectious organism or hazardous agent it is imperative to immediately scrub the wound under running water with a surgical sponge and antiseptic soap for 20 minutes.
- Apply gauze and firm pressure to control bleeding. Apply a band-aid if the wound is superficial and not bleeding.
- Notify your supervisor of the injury
- A SOP should be posted on the door of the room in which the ABSL2/ABSL3 animal was housed. Check the SOP for the name of the Principal Investigator and an emergency contact number in order to contact someone from the lab.
- The SOP should also describe the organism/hazard that the animal had been treated with and safety procedures following human exposure
- Contact the CorVel nurse triage line at 1-866-245-8588 to report the injury and to be directed for any medical care if needed.
- Contact the UTHSC Institutional Biosafety Officer, Francine Rogers, at 448-3537 and describe the incident and animal use protocol under which the work was being performed
- Contact Jennifer Stabenow or Lillian Zalduondo if the injury occurred within the animal facility of the Regional Biocontainment Laboratory.
- Patient and supervisor must fill out an Accident Report within 24 hours.

### **ZOONOTIC INFORMATION**

#### **1) 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, 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.

**2) 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 as needed and seek medical consultation for severe or infected wounds.

**3) Pigs:** Bites from pigs present a risk similar to that from a dog and the same first aid procedures should be followed.

#### **4) Non-human primates**

A “Monkey Bite and Scratch Kit” is located in every area where non-human primates are housed. While bites and scratches from all non-human primates should be taken seriously and be treated immediately, those from macaques carry the greatest risk as these animals can harbor a virus, *Macacine herpesvirus 1* (B virus), which can be fatal to humans. Follow instructions posted on the monkey bite and scratch kit to prevent infection with B virus. These first aid procedures outline specific treatment and reporting requirements. **The most important thing to do following a non-human primate-related injury is to IMMEDIATELY scrub the wound thoroughly with the antiseptic sponges found within the bite kit. Follow the thorough cleaning by irrigating/flushing the area with running water for a minimum of 15 minutes. Similarly, if you have had a mucosal splash, flush your eyes or mouth with running water for a minimum of 15 minutes. Use the timers located in each primate area to time 15 minutes!! ALWAYS SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION** for non-human primate bites, scratches or exposure of mucous membranes to primate body fluids. Notify your supervisor of the injury and contact the CorVel nurse triage line at 1-866-245-8588 to report the injury and to be directed for any medical care. Immediately contact Ms. Evelyn Lewis at the Occupational Health Office (901-448-5630) for medical assessment and treatment. As well, contact a veterinarian in the Laboratory Animal Care Unit (448-5656) who will examine the monkey and take samples to test and culture for B virus, if the animal is of the macaque species. Finally, also report the incident to the Ms. Francine Rogers, the Institutional Biosafety Officer (448-3537).

If you are bitten by a macaque after regular working hours or on the weekend, immediately cleanse the wound as above and then proceed to the Methodist hospital emergency room at Union and Bellevue (901-516-8193). Take the B Virus information booklet with you, (which is located next to the bite and scratch kit) and give it to the examining physician.

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