



Animal Allergies

Why is animal allergy awareness so important?

When working with animals it is important to be aware of the risk of developing allergies from the animals you work with. Animal-related allergies are one of the most significant health hazards faced by laboratory animal workers. (1)

NEED TO KNOW:

- **WARNING!** Exposure to animals or animal products in the workplace may contribute to asthma and allergies.
- People who have allergies to domestic animals are more likely to develop allergies to laboratory animals.
- The most effective way to control and prevent animal allergies is to minimize exposure to allergens. Wear your PPE, it will help to reduce exposure to animal allergens.



WHAT ARE ANIMAL ALLERGIES?

- About 10 to 46 percent of exposed personnel develop laboratory animal allergies, with symptoms progressing from those of minor rhinitis to more severe signs of asthma. (1)(2). Inhalation is one of the most common ways for allergens to enter the body. After a period of time, you may inhale enough quantities of allergens to become sensitized and can develop symptoms even to small amounts of the allergen. (1)
- More serious reactions to inhaled allergens may result in asthma symptoms such as cough, chest tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath. (3)

TIPS TO PREVENT ALLERGIES:

- Perform animal manipulations withing ventilated hoods or safety cabinets when possible.
- Decrease skin contact with animal products such as dander, serum, and urine by using personal protective equipment such as gloves, lab coats, and approved respirators (i.e. N95). (1)(2)
- Do not eat or drink in rooms where animals are kept.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your hands to your face while working in the vivarium.
- If you develop allergic symptoms, please inform EH&S as soon as possible 915-747-7124 eh&s@utep.edu.



HOW ARE YOU EXPOSED?

- Allergens can be released into the air during different activities when dander or fur is shed from the animals (i.e. cage changing, cage dumping and washing).
- You can be exposed allergens through skin or eye contact.
- You can also be exposed trough breaks in the skin (i.e. animal bites) (1).



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE):

- Use PPE to decrease skin exposure (i.e. masks, gloves, gowns, and sleeve covers).
- Respiratory protection such as N95, can be used to decrease the possibility of developing animal allergies (1).

HOW TO REDUCE EXPOSURE !

ENGINEERING CONTROLS:

Engineering controls are the most effective type of workplace controls to minimize exposure to allergens. This may include: Biological Safety cabinets, chemical fume hoods, cages with filter tops, cage racks, clean changing stations and Heating Ventilation Air Conditioning (HVAC) controls of the room.

WORK PRACTICE CONTROLS:

Understand the sources of allergens, your individual risk, ways you can be exposed through your work and ways to control your exposure. (1) Wear protective equipment such as N95 respirator, hair and shoe covers, gloves, & long sleeved gowns when cleaning cages or handling animal byproducts such as dander, serum and urine. (1)



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 **MORE INFORMATION:**

