

# UConn HEALTH

**POLICY NUMBER 2005-13**

**July 8, 2014**

**POLICY: OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM FOR ALL EMPLOYEES WHO ARE INVOLVED WITH LABORATORY ANIMAL WORK**

**PURPOSE:**

To provide immunization updating, evaluation for animal allergies, and serologic monitoring for antibodies when appropriate. To provide Principal Investigators (PIs), researchers, technicians, and students utilizing animal models, or caring for animals, with updated epidemiologic and health information on preventing potential workplace exposures.<sup>1</sup>

**BACKGROUND:**

UConn Health's program of animal care is required by the US Public Health Service (PHS) policy (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/references/phspol.htm>) to have all personnel who come into frequent or substantial contact with animals during the course of conducting research, educational programs, or providing care to the animals, to be enrolled in an Occupational Health Surveillance (OHS) Program.

Various studies have shown that approximately 22% (range 11-44%) of animal workers develop animal allergies.<sup>2-5</sup> Laboratory animal allergies usually will start insidiously with allergic rhinitis, contact urticaria, and/or allergic conjunctivitis followed by lower respiratory disease such as asthma. Occupational asthma due to animal exposures has been reported to occur in 4-22% of those exposed.<sup>6-7</sup> Workers who develop symptoms suspected to be related to workplace animal exposures may elect to undergo a clinical evaluation at the UConn Health Occupational Medicine Clinic Employee Health Services (EHS). The Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and/or appropriate safety personnel will work with Occupational Medicine to implement appropriate protective measures as indicated by the clinical evaluation. This effort is to avoid the last choice protective measure, which is removal of allergic employees from the animal work environment.

The Office for Laboratory Animal Welfare's (NIH) interpretation of PHS Policy is that a health evaluation is a required component of the OHS Program for individuals with frequent or substantial contact with animals and this evaluation is used to assess individuals' potential risks resulting from animal use.

The OHS Program is offered by UConn Health EHS. EHS is responsible for:

- 1) Administering pre-placement exams for all workers including a medical evaluation for respirator use at hire.
- 2) Administering pre-animal use exams for all workers who will use animals.
- 3) All animal care (Center for Comparative Medicine) workers undergo annual surveillance evaluations through EHS. The components of the evaluation include symptom screening, immunization update, spirometry, and a focused exam. Immunoassay allergy testing may be performed as indicated.
- 4) Personnel are advised to notify their supervisors and schedule an appointment with EHS should they develop symptoms that may be related to work place animal exposure.
- 5) Special surveillance for animal users in labs that are considered high risk may be undertaken.

The objective of this policy is to have a pro-active role in ensuring participation and awareness by the PIs, laboratory researchers, students, and technicians involved with using, or caring for, animals. They will be educated during the initial animal users training sessions about the OHS Program. Complete information on the OHS Program is found on the OHS Program website at [http://iacuc.uhc.edu/health\\_safety/index.html](http://iacuc.uhc.edu/health_safety/index.html).

Individuals who may have peripheral contact with animals (e.g., maintenance workers, housekeeping, lab workers who share lab space with individuals who use laboratory animals in the laboratory) are also required to know the risks associated with such peripheral contact with laboratory animals. Though they do not have to be enrolled in the program, there must be documentation that they have read and understood a fact sheet explaining their risks. This information is on the OHS program website at: [http://iacuc.uhc.edu/documents/safetyconcerns\\_animalareas.pdf](http://iacuc.uhc.edu/documents/safetyconcerns_animalareas.pdf).

### **ELIGIBILITY:**

Enrollment in the OHS Program is mandatory for all individuals who work with, or care for, research animals.

### **PROCEDURES:**

#### *A. Individuals who have frequent or substantial contact with animals:*

1. During the initial animal users training, all new personnel will be informed that they must have a medical evaluation with EHS. To get an appointment with EHS, the personnel must call to make an appointment at 860-679-2893.
2. Before the initial medical evaluation, the worker must complete a Mandatory Annual Certificate of Enrollment (MACE) form (located on the web at [http://iacuc.uhc.edu/health\\_safety/enroll.html](http://iacuc.uhc.edu/health_safety/enroll.html)) and submit the form electronically. A copy of the form should be printed and taken to the medical evaluation at EHS. Once electronically submitted, a copy of the form is emailed to the EHS office and the IACUC office.

3. The IACUC office will be responsible for ensuring that employees have completed the required medical evaluations and submission of the MACE forms. New animal care and use protocols, annual reviews, and/or modifications to animal care and use protocols to add personnel will not be approved until all OHS Program requirements have been met.
4. Subsequent to the initial evaluation and the submission of the initial MACE form, all employees will have to submit a MACE form on a yearly basis. The IACUC office is responsible for informing individuals when they must submit the MACE form. After review of the yearly MACE form by EHS personnel, animal users may be contacted by EHS personnel for additional medical evaluation, if required.

*B. Individuals who may have contact with animals while performing their job duties:*

1. A training will be required yearly for all individuals who may come in contact with laboratory animals but do not work directly with the animals. This may include facilities and maintenance workers, housekeeping staff, public safety personnel, research safety personnel, and laboratory workers who share laboratory space where animals are used.
2. These individuals will be given a copy of the fact sheet containing information on risks and will be required to sign a statement that they have read and understood the material given to them regarding their risks.

**References:**

1. NIEHS Employee Health and Safety, <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/index.cfm>
2. Seward, James P. Medical Surveillance of Allergy in Laboratory Animal Handlers. ILAR Journal, 2001; 42(1): 47-54.
3. Aoyama K, Ueda A, Manda F, Matsushita T, Ueda T. Allergy to Laboratory Animals: An Epidemiological Study. Br J Ind Med 1992; 49: 41-47.
4. Hunskar S, Fosse RT. Allergy to Laboratory Mice and Rats: A Review of the Pathophysiology, Epidemiology, and Clinical Aspects. Lab Anim 1990; 24: 358-374.
5. Beeson MF, Dewdney JM, Edwards RG, Lee D, Orr RG. Prevalence and Diagnosis of Laboratory Animal Allergy. Clin Allergy 1992; 13: 433-442.
6. Bryant DH, Boscato LM, Mboloi PN, Stuart MC. Allergy to Laboratory Animals among Animal Handlers. Med J Aust 1995; 163: 415-418.
7. Venables KM, Tee RD, Hawkins ER, Gordon DJ, Wale CJ, Farrer NM, Lam TM, Baxter PJ, Taylor AJM. Laboratory animal Allergy in a Pharmaceutical Company. Br J Ind Med 1988; 45: 660-666.

Jeffrey Seeman (Signed)

9/17/14

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**Jeffrey Seeman**  
**Vice President for Research**

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**Date**

Frank M. Torti (Signed)

10/3/14

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**Frank M. Torti, M.D., M.P.H.**  
**Executive Vice President for Health Affairs**

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**Date**

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