

Animal Users Health and Safety Program

Allergy Information



Why Is Allergy Prevention Important?

Allergies to animals are a common health issue in research and teaching animal facilities and are recognized as an occupational hazard. The objective of the **Occupational Health and Safety Program** is to inform and educate people about safe work practices to minimize their exposure to occupational hazards. People should learn about safe work practices to minimize their exposure to allergy-causing agents, such as animal urine, saliva, dander, and hair. Pollen in bedding, as well as latex or other products, may also cause allergies.

Allergy Prevention Starts with Assessing your Risks

One of the important parts of the **Occupational Health and Safety Program** is evaluating a person's risk of allergy. The risk is assessed by review of the Animal Handler's and User's Medical Questionnaire form. This form must be completed by all individuals who are listed in animal use protocols (AUPs), as well as all animal care staff members. Once completed, the form is reviewed by a medical occupational health specialist at Loma Linda University Health care (LLUHC). If allergy concerns are identified, the person is notified and specific recommendations are offered regarding allergy prevention, safe work practices, and/or the need for additional training, tests, or treatment.

Who Benefits from Allergy Prevention?

- Animal care staff, Veterinarians
- People named on Animal Protocols (*Researchers, undergraduate and graduate students, including visiting scholars*)
- Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) members
- UCR employees who may not have direct contact with or responsibilities related to animals, but who as part of their job duties work in animal housing facilities or animal procedure rooms where others work directly with animals (*e.g., building maintenance staff, security staff, custodial staff*)
- Outside contractors working in animal facilities
- Volunteers
- Visitors
- Students enrolled in classes that use vertebrate animals

What Are Common Allergy Symptoms?

Respiratory Symptoms

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|----------------|---------------------|
| Sneezing | Runny nose |
| Irritated eyes | Coughing |
| Wheezing | Shortness of breath |

Skin Conditions

- Rash (*red, bumpy, scaly, or irritated skin*)
- Hives

Anaphylaxis

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Difficulty swallowing | Hoarseness |
| Shortness of breath | Dizziness |
| Fainting | Nausea |
| Generalized itching | |

How Can You Reduce your Risk of Allergic Reactions?

- Always wash your hands after contact with animals and before leaving the animal facility.
- Do not eat, drink, smoke, handle contact lenses, or apply cosmetics in work areas, and wash your hands before engaging in any of these activities.
- Wear personal protective equipment: (*lab coats or scrubs, a mask, disposable gloves*)
- When transporting animals outside a facility, follow IACUC guidelines.

What Should You Do if You Suspect You have Allergies?

- Consult your health care provider if you have general allergy concerns.
- UCR Employees should talk to their supervisor regarding work-related allergy concerns.
- Students should consult the Campus Health Center

For additional information about minimizing these and other health risks, contact:

Office of the Campus Veterinarian

University Office Building, Rm. 216
(951) 827-6332
www.vet.ucr.edu/ohs.htm

Environmental Health and Safety

South Campus Drive
(951) 827-5528
www.ehs.ucr.edu

Campus Health Center (students only)

(951) 827-3031
www.campushealth.ucr.edu

