



## **UNCG Health and Safety Program for Personnel Using Animals in Teaching and Research**

### **PREFACE**

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro is committed to ensuring the health and safety of individuals working with animals in their professional activities, both on and off campus. The goal of the UNCG Health and Safety Program for Personnel Using Animals in Teaching and Research (HSPUSTR) is to prevent occupational injury and illness while working with animals by avoiding, controlling or eliminating hazards on campus and, to the extent possible, off campus. The emphasis of such a program is the prevention of illness and injury, but our program also includes provisions for early diagnosis and treatment when necessary.

There are two programs for preventing occupational injury and illness while working with animals at UNCG. One is for personnel hired by the Animal Facility and one is for individuals that work with animals but who are not hired by the Animal Facility. Animal Facility personnel include individuals who work in the Animal Facility on a full or part-time basis. Individuals who work with animals but are not hired by the Animal Facility include faculty, staff, and students engaged in funded or unfunded research projects or teaching in a class or field setting. Personnel in the Animal Facility must follow guidelines established by the Animal Facility. Individuals who work with animals but are not hired by the Animal Facility must follow the guidelines contained in this document.

HSPUSTR is supported by the Office of Research Compliance. It requires effective interactions among researchers, the Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), the Consulting Veterinarian, the University Safety Office, and Moses Cone Occupational Health Services. HSPUSTR has four (4) key points: Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment, Personnel Training, Personal Hygiene/Protection, and Medical Evaluations.

### **1. HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

It is the responsibility of lead professors and principal investigators (PI) who work with animals to assess dangers associated with their work and to select safeguards appropriate to the risks. The Moses Cone Occupational Health Services office will perform medical evaluations to ensure that the risks remain at acceptable levels.

## **2. PERSONNEL TRAINING**

Individuals who work with animals should be given clearly defined procedural training for the risks they incur by working with animals. This training should include chemical safety; zoonoses (any infectious disease that may be transmitted from animals, both wild and domestic, to humans or from humans to animals); proper handling waste materials; microbiological and physical hazards (including those related to radiation and allergies); unusual conditions or agents that might be part of experimental procedures (e.g., use of immunocompromised animals), personal hygiene, and other considerations (e.g., precautions to be taken if personnel are pregnant, ill, or have decreased immunocompetence) as appropriate to the risk imposed by their workplace/environment. The PI or Lead Professor is responsible for providing this training. If needed, he / she may draw upon input from the occupational health doctor at Moses Cone Occupational Health Services, the Consulting Veterinarian, the Office of Research Compliance, and /or the Office of Safety at UNCG. This training must provide appropriate instructions for conducting duties, an understanding of the hazards involved, and assurance that proficiency is attained in implementing the required safeguards. This training is in addition to the IACUC-required Laboratory Animal Training Association modules.

## **3. PERSONAL HYGIENE/PROTECTION**

It is essential that all personnel maintain a high standard of personal cleanliness. Individuals who work with animals should wash their hands and change clothing as often as necessary to maintain good personal hygiene. They should wear clothing suitable for use in the Animal Facility, classroom laboratories, or field studies. Disposable gloves, masks, head covers, coats, coveralls, and shoe covers may be desirable in some circumstances. Laboratory coats worn in the Animal Facility should not be worn outside it. Likewise, clothing worn in field studies should be contained in a safe and sanitized manner. See section 4 for instances where respirators are necessary.

## **4. MEDICAL EVALUATIONS**

All individuals who have a potential risk from their work with animals are required to have a medical evaluation prior to initiating the work, referred to in this document as the initial medical evaluation. Thereafter, a follow-up evaluation is required annually, as long as the work with animals continues. All individuals that submit an IACUC protocol will be required to have a medical evaluation, unless the PI identifies particular individuals who will not have any risks associated with animal exposure.

Both the initial and the follow-up medical evaluations are conducted by the Moses Cone Occupational Health Services. After satisfactory completion of either evaluation, the Moses Cone Occupational Health Services will notify the ORC who will pass the information to the individual.

The first step of the initial medical evaluation, and frequently the only step required, is for the individual who will be working with animals to complete a medical questionnaire. In the questionnaire individuals disclose existing medical conditions, species to which they will be exposed, and other relevant personal health information. The purpose of this evaluation is to provide early identification of conditions, if any, that may present an increased risk of adverse health effects that could result from working with animals. The questionnaire is evaluated by the Moses Cone Occupational Health Services for a nominal fee. Work with animals may begin unless Moses Cone Occupational Health Services identify that additional steps are necessary. Then work should be delayed until they are completed.

Some individuals who work with animals may need to wear a respirator while they are working with them. They can self-identify or it can be determined as a result of the information supplied on the initial medical evaluation. If it is determined that it is necessary for an individual to use a respirator when working with animals, then the individual must complete the Occupational Health and Safety Medical Questionnaire and Evaluation for Respirator Use form which can be obtained at <http://www.uncg.edu/sft/mntabcon.html> (section 0080) and be fitted for the respirator by the Office of Safety at UNCG.

Based on the recommendation from Moses Cone Occupational Health Service, individuals may be asked to submit to a second step of the initial medical evaluation, a physical examination. The physical examination can be done by either the Moses Cone Health Services or the individual's personal physician. The expense for this examination will be paid by the individual or his employer. Moses Cone Health Services does not accept any insurance. This examination may identify the need for vaccinations or immunizations. Once this step is completed satisfactorily, work with animals may begin

The Office of Research Compliance will send to all individuals who have been issued a medical clearance an annual follow-up medical questionnaire prior to the anniversary date of the last evaluation. Any changes to the work with animals that has occurred since the last medical clearance must be reported. The medical questionnaire will be evaluated by the Moses Cone Occupational Health Services for a nominal fee. The Moses Cone Occupational Health Services will give the results of this evaluation to ORC who will pass the information to the individual.

Personal medical information generated by any of these exams will be kept confidential. If a physical examination is necessary, this information will remain between the employee and the physician. The employee can contact the physician who performs the examination with any questions regarding the results.