



Division of Laboratory Animal Resources

Information for Visitors, Maintenance Personnel, and Contractors

All visitors, including contractors, must report to the Office of the Division of Laboratory Animal Resources before entering any area in one of the housing facilities. While in the facilities, avoid contact with animals, their waste, or any other potentially contaminated materials unless these are directly related to assigned duties.

Hazards that may be encountered in the DLAR

There are certain risks involved when visiting the animal facilities at ETSU. In general, health and safety matters are related to the animal species, the frequency and type of contact, facility design, equipment design, human behavior, and each person's health status.

Allergic reactions to animals are among the most common conditions that adversely affect the health of workers exposed to animals in research. All personnel should be aware that laboratory animals, particularly rats, rabbits, guinea pigs, hamsters, and birds, are sources of potent allergens. Products from animals that may induce allergic reactions are animal skin, dander, fur, urine, and saliva. The route of exposure is most often due to airborne allergen; however, contact allergies are quite common. Depending on the exposure, the allergic reaction may induce respiratory symptoms, itchy eyes, and rashes. Symptoms usually evolve after repeated exposure over a period of 1-2 years; however, allergic reactions may happen on first exposure.

Development of aerosols and dust should be avoided when working around animals. Some work practices and personal protective equipment can reduce the potential development of allergies and perhaps alter the severity.

If you notice symptoms of an allergic reaction such as a skin rash or hives, itchy eyes, or difficulty breathing while in the animal facility or within three days after having been in an animal facility you should notify your supervisor. If you seek medical attention, you should mention to your physician that you might have been exposed to laboratory animals.

Physical hazards such as slippery floors, excessive noise, sharp objects, hot surfaces, pressure vessels (compressed gas cylinders, autoclaves) and many other conditions may be present in the animal facility. Precautionary measures should be taken where these hazards occur.

Radioisotopes are radioactive forms of normally nonradioactive elements. They emit low levels of radiation, which makes them valuable as tracers in biological investigations of metabolic processes. Usually these types of isotopes are dangerous only if contacted directly. If radioisotopes are present in a room in the animal facility, there will be a warning sign describing the hazard and recommended protection measures posted on the entrance door.

Hazard containment: Eating, drinking, chewing gum, or application of cosmetics is not permitted in the animal facility.

Protective clothing: Individuals exposed to animals, their waste, or other products must wear protective clothing. A lab coat must be worn when entering an animal room or other area with potential contamination, and gloves must be worn when handling animals or their bedding. Persons with allergies to the animals may need to take additional precautions.

Personnel should avoid touching their eyes, face, mouth, or other body surfaces with contaminated hands or gloves.

Used protective clothing and devices should not be worn outside the animal facility. Disposable protective clothing should be discarded when soiled. Soiled protective clothing should never be worn or taken home.

Personal hygiene: Hand washing is a crucial activity for safeguarding personnel in the animal facility. Hands should be washed after contact with the animals, their waste, or with contaminated or potentially contaminated surfaces and materials, and after removal of contaminated gloves. Hands should be routinely washed before eating, drinking, applying cosmetics, before touching contact lenses, and before leaving the animal facility. Effective hand washing consists of at least a 20-second lathering with soap and water, followed by a thorough rinse.

Hearing protection: Noise levels may reach potentially damaging levels in certain areas of the animal facility. Hearing protection is available and should be worn by personnel entering those areas.

Eye protection: Persons wearing contact lenses should use safety eyeglasses or goggles.

Further information can be obtained from the Office of the Division of Laboratory Animal Resources, 423-439-6292.