

Occupational Health Program for Personnel Exposed to Vertebrate Animals East Tennessee State University

Animal Bites and Scratches

Bites and scratches can expose animal technicians, laboratory personnel and others working with animals to biologic hazards transmitted through contaminated saliva, secretions or blood. These injuries are largely preventable through proper training in animal handling techniques. Inappropriate handling can induce discomfort, pain, and distress, provoking an animal to inflict injury on its handler. Anybody picking up or restraining an animal must be trained in proper handling techniques. Intractable animals might have to be sedated before they are physically restrained. Training in the proper handling techniques of laboratory animals is available at ETSU in the Division of Laboratory Animal Resources.

Animal bites, including those inflicted by rodents with little tissue damage, can result in contamination by the normal oral flora of the animals. The early initiation of antimicrobial therapy for animal bites that are not trivial appears warranted. The biting animal should be evaluated by a veterinarian. Everybody working with animals must have current tetanus immunization. Rabies, hantavirus infection, cat-scratch fever, tularemia, rat-bite fever, brucellosis, and orf are among the specific diseases that can be transmitted by animal bites.

Safety Precautions

Proper work practices reduce the chances of injury and infection. When working with animals:

- i Exercise caution at all times.
- i Wear appropriate protective clothing.
- i Know how to handle and properly restrain the animal you are working with.
- i Work with at least one other person when handling fractious animals.

First Aid for Animal Bites and Scratches

- i Massage wound immediately to make it bleed and to express possible contamination.
- i Cleanse and irrigate the wound with soap and running water for at least 15 minutes. Use disinfectants and bandages from the First Aid box in the DLAR office to cover and protect the wound.
- i Notify your supervisor.
- i Depending on the severity of the wound, seek medical treatment: if you are a registered student, you should report to the Student Health Service in Lamb Hall, Room 055, tel. 439-4225 for medical evaluation and treatment. If you are an ETSU employee or student worker needing medical attention you should seek treatment at ETSU Family Medicine Associates (9-6464), at the Emergency Room at the Johnson City Medical Center Hospital, or from one of the physicians included in the long list of providers authorized to treat injuries for the State of Tennessee (<http://www.etsu.edu/humanres/forms/workersdirector.pdf>).
- i **Report:** Submit OSHA Form No 301 through your supervisor to ETSU Human Resources, Campus Box 564, and to the Occupational Health Office, College of Nursing, Campus Box 70617. The form is available at: (<http://www.etsu.edu/humanres/forms/OSHA301.pdf>).

Dog or Cat Bites

In the case that a person is bitten by a dog or a cat, the injury must be attended to by a physician for medical care and possibly rabies vaccination.

The biting animal must be placed under quarantine and observation for at least 10 days. During this period the animal cannot be used for experimental or teaching purposes. If the animal does not show any clinical signs of a rabies infection during the quarantine period, it can be released to the researcher. If the biting animal dies or shows signs of illness during this quarantine period, it will receive a full diagnostic work-up. Animals displaying signs of a central nervous system disorder during quarantine may require necropsy and evaluation for rabies.

Reference: Occupational Health and Safety in the Care and Use of Research Animals. National Research Council. National Academy Press 1997. ISBN 309-05299-8