BACKGROUND

Federal guidelines require the University of Rhode Island (URI) to have a health and safety program for all individuals with occupational exposure to animals. The URI Animal Users Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) is an essential part of the overall program of animal care and use, and must be consistent with federal, state, and local regulations and should focus on maintaining a safe and healthy workplace. The program is operated jointly by URI Office of Research Integrity (ORI), URI Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Office and URI Health Services.

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

All personnel and students working with animals in research and teaching environments are required to participate in the OHSP prior to working with animals. The HSP consists of the following elements:

- **Training** – Personnel and students are required to review OHSP Awareness Information, Species-Specific training (as applicable), and other EHS training courses associated with their position and duties. Awareness training and Species Specific training is offered through the use of Information Sheets. Review of the information is documented through a Training Acknowledgement.

- **Occupational Health and Wellness Survey** – Personnel and students that fall into Categories B through E below are offered the opportunity to complete the survey annually. The intent of the survey is to provide personnel and students with professional medical advice should they have any concerns about allergies or exposures to animals. Although it is not preferred, there is an option not to disclose medical information. The completed surveys will be reviewed by URI Health Services (for students) and URI’s Occupational Health provider (for personnel). Information will be kept confidential.

- **Medical Surveillance and Immunizations** – Based on the responses to the Occupational Health and Wellness Survey, URI Health Services or URI’s Occupation Health provider may recommend risk specific preventive measures (e.g., respirators), immunizations, additional tests, and/or health monitoring personnel. The program recommends all personnel and students with access to animal facilities receive a tetanus vaccination and rabies vaccination series and titer check every two years for personnel working with wild caught mammals.

URI recognizes that chemical, physical, biologic, and protocol related hazards are inherent to animal research. The occupational health risk depends on the species and health status of the animal, the type of work performed, and the extent of the individual’s exposure to animals. URI divides personnel into five categories based on anticipated risk. Project-specific risk
assessments are performed and appropriate measures are taken by the relevant safety offices and committees to ensure that risks are mitigated.

Preventive services are provided based on the risk. Other services may be necessary and are at the discretion of the health care provider. Individuals may opt out of the program or any of the services provided.

The supervisor or instructor is responsible for informing the individual of potential occupational exposures. This includes referring the individual to participate in the OHSP when the individual is assigned to work with a new species. Occupation-related health issues which are identified through Occupational Health and Wellness Survey, physical examinations, laboratory testing, or are self-reported are followed up with appropriate diagnosis and treatment by the responsible health care provider (e.g., URI Health Services or Occupational Health Provider). Students utilize URI Health Services or their health care provider for health services related to this program. Personnel utilize the URI contracted occupational health provider (e.g., OEHN) or their health care provider for health services related to this program.

Access to URI Animal Facilities will be granted only after the requirements of the HSP are met. ORI, in consultation with EHS is responsible for approving access. If the ongoing requirements of this program are not maintained access to the URI Animal Facilities will be denied or canceled.

ANIMAL EXPOSURE CATEGORIES

Category A- Fish, amphibians, and reptiles or limited/supervised animal contact

- Personnel/Students with exposure to non-venomous fish, amphibians and/or reptiles, or with limited or no animal contact who are under the direct oversight and/or supervision of trained URI staff (Examples: students with limited contact to laboratory raised rodents and/or rabbits, students in Animal and Veterinary Sciences courses), contractors, visiting scientists, visitors, and maintenance personnel).
- Preventive medicine service:
  - Review Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form

Category B- Laboratory raised rodents, rabbits, or birds

- Personnel/Students with exposure to laboratory raised rodents, rabbits, or birds
- Preventive Service:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form
  - Animal-specific Occupational Health and Safety materials
Category C – Pigs, non-pregnant ruminants, or vaccinated carnivores

- Personnel/Students with exposure to pigs, non-pregnant ruminants, and vaccinated carnivores
- Preventive Service:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Animal-specific Occupational Health and Safety materials
  - Occupational Health and Wellness Survey (pre-exposure and annual reminder)
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form
  - Tetanus immunization (recommended and offered)
  - Physical examination with laboratory testing (offered based on determination by Occupational Health Provider)

Category D – Wild caught mammals or unvaccinated carnivores

- Personnel/Students with exposure to wild caught mammals or unvaccinated carnivores
- Preventive Service:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Animal-specific Occupational Health and Safety materials
  - Occupational Health and Wellness Survey (pre-exposure and annual reminder)
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form
  - Tetanus immunization (recommended and offered)
  - Rabies vaccination/titer (recommended and offered as determined by an Occupational Health Provider)
  - Physical examination with laboratory testing (offered based on determination by Occupational Health Provider)

Category E – Pregnant ruminants

- Personnel/Students with exposure to pregnant ruminants
- Preventive Service:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Animal-specific Occupational Health and Safety materials
  - Occupational Health and Wellness Survey (pre-exposure and annual reminder)
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form
  - Tetanus immunization (recommended and offered)
  - Q Fever testing (offered as determined by an Occupational Health Provider)
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- Physical examination with laboratory testing (offered based on determination by Occupational Health Provider)

Category F – Venomous/Poisonous Animals
- Personnel/Students with exposure to venomous/poisonous animals (e.g., venomous snakes, reptiles, fish)
- Preventive Service:
  - Occupational Health and Safety Program Awareness information
  - Animal-specific Occupational Health and Safety materials
  - Occupational Health and Wellness Survey (pre-exposure and annual reminder)
  - Signed Occupational Health and Safety Program Training Acknowledgement form
  - Tetanus immunization (recommended and offered)
  - Physical examination with laboratory testing (offered based on determination by Occupational Health Provider)

REFERENCES
Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories, 5th Edition (2009)

Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals, 8th Edition (2011)

Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (2002)
http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/olaw.htm