

## Zoonotic Disease Risk Handout

This information sheet is being supplied to you to help assist you in understanding risks faced in the conduct of your job at The University of Toledo (UT). It is supplied to personnel identified as having a reasonable occupational exposure risk to the agent described. This information has been developed with the assistance of the UT Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine, Office of Health and Safety and the Office of Occupational Medicine. Questions and concerns should be directed to any of the units.

**Leptospirosis:** Leptospirosis is an infection caused by various bacteria in the genus, *Leptospira*. Research animals that have not been specifically bred and raised for research represent a potential source of the infection. Farm-type animals, such as cattle and pigs, can potentially harbor the bacteria without demonstrating signs of it. Dogs and wildlife species may also be infected and transmit the bacteria to people. *Leptospira* are viable in wet environments, are highly infectious and are capable of penetrating intact mucous membranes. Hence, infections are usually established following contact with water contaminated with *Leptospira*-containing urine. Infection may cause a variety of clinical syndromes: photosensitization, hemolytic anemia, hepatic or renal failure, or abortion may be seen. The infection can be fatal.

Avoidance of contact with infected animals, their urine, and contaminated water sources are important to lessen risk. Use of protective clothing such as exam gloves and frequent hand washing is also important.

When ill, it is important to discuss your possible occupational exposures with your attending physician as this information can be instrumental in timely diagnosis and treatment.