

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.

Rabies: Rabies is a relatively rare yet devastating viral disease that can result in severe neurologic problems and death. Most cases of rabies occur in wild animals although any mammal can contract the disease. The disease is virtually unheard of in common laboratory animals. The chances of rabies infection from dogs and cats bred specifically for research is similarly very small. However, some dogs used at the UT Health Science Campus are "random source" and could be incubating the disease on arrival. All bites of any type should be reported immediately to one's supervisor.

Field researchers and those using wild-caught animals must remain vigilant to the threat of rabies. Rabies is routinely seen in many species, especially in raccoons, skunks, foxes and bats. Sporadic cases have been well documented in other species of wildlife, such as woodchucks. Domestic "farm" animals have been an important source of human cases. Precautions should take into account that infected animals may shed the virus in the saliva before visible signs of illness appear and that a bite is not required to contract rabies. Recent cases associated with bats have yielded no identifiable "contact".

There is a human vaccine that offers protection from infection. Vaccination is offered to program participants that may have an occupational exposure risk as recommended by the CDC Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP, MMWR 48(RR-1):1-21 or subsequent).

Should exposure, especially to saliva or a bite, occur, immediate and thorough washing of the wound with soap and water is important. Use of a disinfectant such as povidone-iodine should be done, if possible. A medical consultation and an incident report needs to be completed (see Report of Animal Bites S-08-023).

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.