Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee

Basic Guidelines for Biological and Personal Safety When Working with Vertebrate Animals

There are two forms of safety with which individuals working with vertebrate animals at the University of New Hampshire (UNH) must be familiar; **Biosafety** and **Personal Safety**. These are to ensure not only the health and welfare of animals, but each individual's own health and welfare as well.

**Biosafety**

Biosafety is the prevention of anything that will have a negative impact on a biological system (e.g., animals, humans, ecosystems). These are called biohazards. There are many different types of biohazards, including, but not limited to: chemicals, infectious agents, radiological agents and pharmaceutical drugs. Different biohazards have varied importance depending on what is being used and where it is being used. In laboratory work, individuals should make sure they speak with the laboratory manager or faculty member in charge about the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and the potential hazards that they encounter. Individuals working at any barn or larger facility should do the same; proper attire must be worn at all times and designated procedures followed.

Of all the potential biohazards, individuals need to pay particular attention to infectious organisms. Biosecurity is a two-way street; that is, individuals need to be concerned not only with to what they may be exposed, but also to what they are exposing animals. A few key points:

- **Be aware of any infectious agents to which humans may be exposed.** Infectious organisms that can be spread from animals to humans are known as zoonotic diseases, and may be of concern depending on where and with what species individuals are working.
- **Do not wear PPE or barn clothes from one facility into another.** This is a very easy way to cross contaminate facilities. For instance, anyone working at two different dairy farms must never wear the same clothing/boots between facilities without proper cleaning/disinfection. Similarly, anyone who has a pet rat at home and also works with disease-free rats in the laboratory must inform the facility/laboratory manager about this and create a plan to reduce the risk of bringing possible diseases from home into the laboratory.
- **Attend to personal hygiene.** Wash hands! The cleanest, freshest smelling barn clothes are not going to protect anyone who eats a sandwich with dirty hands. A large number of zoonotic diseases are spread from contaminated hands straight to mouths. This is also an easy way to spread contamination to other areas, via door handles, handrails, etc. Individuals should remember proper hygiene for their own health as well as the health of others.

Anyone with specific questions or concerns about biosafety should contact either the Office of Environmental Health & Safety (603/862-4041), or the Animal Resources Office (603/862-4629).

**Personal and Facility Security**

Everyone should be aware of their surroundings. No-one should ever let unauthorized people into a facility; everyone should be aware of strangers entering a laboratory, or unknown people wandering through a barn late at night. If at any time individuals think there may be a danger to themselves or to animals, they should remove themselves from the danger and call for help. **Personal safety always comes first.**

- For an emergency, dial 911
- UNH Police, 603-862-1427