



NORTH CAROLINA AGRICULTURAL AND TECHNICAL STATE UNIVERSITY

SEC. V–Occupational Health 1.0

Occupational Health and Safety Program for Animal Handlers

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICY

I. POLICY

It is the policy of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (A&T) to assure that the University is in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act's regulations and the Public Health Service (PHS) Policy concerning working with animals. To assure that laboratory animals at A&T receive the highest quality care and to protect the health of people who work with and around animals at A&T, anyone having substantial contact with animals is required to enroll in the Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) for animal handlers and obtain medical clearance before he/she is approved to work with animals.

The OHSP will assign an enrolled individual to a risk category for health monitoring/surveillance based upon the information contained in the individual's health questionnaire and professional medical judgment.

Factors used to assign an individual to a risk category include, but are not limited to:

1. Animal species;

2. Potential zoonoses;
3. Individual's health status (e.g., allergies, asthma, cardio-pulmonary health, immune system, vaccination history, pregnancy, etc.);
4. Biosafety level of work being performed (i.e., ABSL-1, ABSL-2, or ABSL-3)
5. Physical/chemical/environmental hazards (e.g., radiation, toxic chemicals, noise, etc.)

The University has ethical and legal requirements to inform individuals of health risks that could affect them and of appropriate precautions to be taken. Risks are mitigated through institutional policies, engineering controls, work practices, and personnel protective equipment. It is the responsibility of the principal investigators to ensure that laboratory staff are informed of and participate in this A&T OHSP process.

II. REGULATION

The use of animals for research and teaching at A&T is regulated by and conducted in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) of 1966, as amended, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) AWA regulations, and the U.S. Public Health Service Policy on the Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy).

The PHS Policy requires A&T to follow the National Research Council Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (*Guide*, 2011). The *Guide* indicates that an occupational health and safety program based on "risk assessment" **must** be a part of the overall animal care and use program. Failure to adhere to the requirements in the *Guide* could result in the loss of federal funding to A&T.

III. PURPOSE

This Occupational Health and Safety Program (OHSP) protects the health and safety of individuals who work with animals, to meet requirements of the Animal Welfare Act and PHS Policy (e.g. National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). The goal of the OHSP program is to identify, evaluate, manage, and reduce potential health risks associated with an individual's exposure to animals and hazardous agents. The A&T Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) and A&T Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Office are responsible for implementation of this OHSP related to the use of animals in research, teaching, and testing. The IACUC has the responsibility to verify that individuals are enrolled in this

OHSP before they are approved to work with animals. Individuals are not allowed to have access to animal areas until they are enrolled in the OHSP.

IV. PARTICIPATION

Participation in this OHSP is mandatory for all who have substantial contact with animals at the University. An individual has successfully met this requirement when she/he is enrolled in the University's OHSP and has received either:

1. A risk assessment and medical survey that indicates no further evaluation;
or
2. A risk assessment that indicates further evaluation

V. ENROLLMENT

Individuals who have substantial contact with animal or animal tissue/fluid exposure enroll in the OHSP by completing an initial risk assessment. Faculty; staff, including maintenance personnel, IACUC members, security personnel, and Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) personnel; volunteers; and students who will have some level of animal exposure must also enroll by completing the risk assessment. Students whose exposure to animals is limited to classroom activities only are not required to enroll. The responses are sent or given to the enrollee's supervisor or instructor for validation. Once approved at that level, the responses are evaluated by the EHS to determine whether a medical evaluation is needed. If so, the information will be further reviewed by the University health care professional to determine if further medical evaluation is required. The enrollee will be notified if further medical evaluation is necessary.

VI. ANNUAL UPDATES

EHS will review and update this OHSP as needed. Enrollment will require an annual renewal of the OHSP enrollment questionnaire by all enrollees who shall note any change in his/her work with animals or health status. The OHSP professional reviews the completed annual health questionnaires for significant changes in the individual's work or health status and forwards the questionnaire for follow-up occupational health assessment and/or medical management, as needed.

VII. CLINICAL EVALUATION

Clinical evaluations consist of a risk assessment and medical survey/or medical exam and provisions for any required immunizations. Sebastian Health Center on campus will provide clinical evaluations for all enrollees in the OHSP.

The types of medical surveillance activities specified for each risk assessment is dependent on the various categories of animal exposures. Additional occupational exposures to hazardous materials (e.g. carcinogens, highly toxic chemicals, infectious agents) may necessitate additional medical surveillance requirements.

If at any time an individual experiences a change in his/her health status or change in the level of animal exposure (e.g. allergies, pregnancy, immunocompromised, chronic medical illness, etc.), he/she is required to inform the University OHSP professional.

VIII. INJURY OR ILLNESS

An individual who experiences an injury or illness related to working with animals must report the event to his/her supervisor/principal investigator and must complete an Employee Accident Report Form. If medical treatment is needed, an injured A&T employee should go to the medical provider approved by Human Resources for workers' compensation injuries, and A&T students should go to the Sebastian Health Center. Faculty, staff, and students working on the North Carolina Research Campus in Kannapolis, N.C. should go to the health care provider designated for that geographic area. In the event that treatment is provided somewhere other than the places listed above, the employee must schedule an appointment with EHS and a non-employee student should schedule an appointment with Sebastian Health Center for an evaluation before returning to work or the lab. All individuals must submit the completed Employee Accident Report Form to their supervisor/principal investigator and to Human Resources.

IX. INSTITUTIONAL/ IACUC RESPONSIBILITIES

The IACUC has the responsibility to verify that individuals are enrolled in this OHSP before they are allowed to have access to animal areas and before they are approved to work with animals. If individuals associated with a new protocol are not enrolled, the protocol will not be approved by the IACUC.

Date Amended Policy is Effective: Upon Approval

First approved: August 5, 2013

Revised:

Approved by the Chancellor