

Working with Small Animals

All procedures on animals should be performed by properly trained personnel. By using safe work practices and appropriate personal protective equipment, workers can minimize the likelihood that they will be bitten, scratched, and/or exposed to animal body fluids and tissues.

Use Safe Work Practices

- Avoid using sharps whenever possible. Be extremely careful when using a needle and syringe or when using sharps during necropsy (autopsy) procedures. Never remove, recap, bend, break, or clip used needles from disposable syringes. Use safe needles whenever possible.
- Keep doors to rooms holding research animals closed.
- Perform procedures carefully to reduce the possibility of creating splashes or aerosols.
- Restrict operations that generate hazardous aerosols to biological safety cabinets or other ventilated enclosures, such as animal bedding dump stations.
- Clean up all spills immediately.
- Promptly decontaminate work surfaces when procedures are completed and after surfaces are soiled by spills of animal material or waste.
- Properly dispose of animal waste and bedding.
- Remove gloves and wash your hands after handling animals or animal tissues and before leaving areas where animals are kept.
- Report all incidents and equipment malfunctions to your supervisor.

Wear Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Wear all required PPE identified by your employer based on the activity performed.
- Wear gloves designed to resist puncture from animal bites.
- Wear eye protection. This will not only protect your eyes from potential scratches, but also will protect them from direct contamination by animal secretions or indirect contamination from materials contaminated with animal secretions.
- Wear head/hair covering to protect against accidental sprays or splashes.
- Wear respiratory protection, if required. NIOSH-certified respirators that are properly selected and fitted will protect you from small particle aerosols. You must be enrolled in the Respiratory Protection Program and have a physical prior to wearing a respirator.