**Welcome to animal research at Ithaca College!**

**IACUC**

The animal research and teaching programs at Ithaca College have been approved by the IC Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC). IACUC is a federally-mandated oversight committee that reviews all work involving vertebrates to ensure that research is conducted in a safe, responsible, and ethical manner. You should be aware that if you should at any time feel concerns about safety or welfare of animals or people in these programs, or concerns about the ethics of our research conduct, you can and should contact the IACUC. [iacuc@ithaca.edu](mailto:iacuc@ithaca.edu) or [(607) 274-1206](tel:(607)%20274-1206) will reach the administrative assistant for Sponsored Research. Anonymous reporting is also available through EthicsPoint, link available at the bottom of the IC IACUC webpage

https://www.ithaca.edu/sponsored-research/institutional-animal-care-and-use-committee-iacuc

You can also reach out to any biology faculty or staff if you feel more comfortable approaching them, they will help your concerns be put forward.

Ithaca College's Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee is also responsible for evaluating and mitigating the human-health risks associated with animals used in research and teaching. The IACUC coordinates with research faculty, animal facility staff, the office of Environmental Health and Safety, and the Institutional Biosafety Committee to identify hazards posed by the use of animals, and makes recommendations on safety protocols.

**Individual Risk Management**

All individuals working with animals are expected to:

* Complete required training (see below)
* Complete and be cleared on health risk assessment (see below)
* Follow safety recommendations at all times
* Maintain restricted access to the animal facilities
* Wear personal protective equipment (PPE) as recommended
* Dispose of waste appropriately
* Decontaminate equipment and work surfaces at least once a day
* Use good personal hygiene:
  + Wash hands after animal contact and before leaving facilities
  + Do not eat, drink, smoke, handle contact lens, or apply cosmetics in work areas
* Notify your supervisor if you become aware of a sick or dead animal
* Promptly seek medical care and report any work-related injuries or illnesses (see below)
* If you have a fever, diarrhea, or other symptoms that could be associated with zoonotic disease or other hazards you work with, seek medical attention and inform your health provider of your work with animals.
* Update your health risk assessment if your personal health circumstances change.

**Training and Health Risk Assessment**

Students exposed to animals through classroom exercises are exempt from the training and health screening described below. They should be aware, however, that medical conditions such as being immunocompromised, pregnant, or having allergies may increase their risks to hazards related to animal use. The faculty will note the specific hazards associated with the vertebrate use involved in the course, and provide the training necessary for safe completion of the course.

To participate in animal care and research at Ithaca College, you will need:

* Lab Safety Seminar (1x/year)
  + your supervisor will share dates; usually two offerings per term
* CITI online training "Working with the IACUC" (1x/3years)
  + additional species-specific training courses may be required
* Hands-on training with your supervisor
* Health Risk Assessment

**Health Risk Assessment** primary screening is a confidential health questionnaire. It can be reviewed by a health professional in Hammond Health Center or you can go to the healthcare provider of your choice. (If you submit to Hammond Health, and there are any risk concerns identified, you will be asked to complete a medical consultation arranged with a healthcare provider of your choice). Some research activities may require you to provide documentation, for example specific immunization records. Clearance of a health risk assessment is mandatory for approval to work in animal care and use, in accordance with the federal Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (PHS Policy) mandated by the Health Research Extension Act of 1985.

**Accessing CITI Training**

The training module can be found at: [**http://www.citiprogram.org/**](http://www.citiprogram.org/). Click the “New Users Register Here” link and proceed to register. Under "Select your institution or organization" you should select **Ithaca College**in the "Participating Institutions" drop down box. The modules are accessed via a set of questions; "Working with IACUC" and species-specific modules are under question 7.

**Treating and Reporting Injuries or Illness**

Any bite or scratch from an animal can be a vehicle for zoonosis or infection, and should be washed immediately with antibacterial soap and hot water, scrubbing for 3-5 minutes, even if they appear inconsequential. First-aid kits are available in the cleaning area of the animal care suite. Any injuries or illnesses requiring more than first-aid procedures should receive medical attention. Campus public safety officers may be called for assistance (607) 274-3333 or 911. Emergency care is available at Cayuga Medical Center Emergency Room. Non-emergencies may be seen at Hammond Health Center, your own provider, or local clinics such as Cayuga Medical Associates Immediate Care and WellNow Urgent Care (see https://www.ithaca.edu/hammond-health-center for resources). If you are having unexplained illness particularly fever or diarrhea, you should seek medical attention and inform your provider of your animal-related exposure. Work-related injuries and illnesses should be reported within 24 hours. Inform your supervisor, and they will aid you in appropriate incident reporting.

**General Hazards Involved in Using Animals**

**Allergies**

Individuals who have preexisting allergic conditions face a greater risk of developing allergies to animals. Typical allergens include animal urine, saliva, dander, and hair. Most common symptoms include runny nose, itchy eyes, and skin rashes. If ignored, reactions can lead to more severe symptoms such as asthma (coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath) and may persist beyond the period of animal exposure. In extreme cases, life-threatening anaphylactic reactions can occur.

Exposure to animal allergens should be limited to present the development of allergens. The facilities are well-ventilated, but should only be entered for active care and research purposes. Personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves, and personal hygiene are important barriers to animal allergen exposure. For some people, a properly fitted respirator may be recommended for superior protection. In this case, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety will assist with the processes of medical clearance and training that are legally required.

**Animal Bites and Scratches**

Bites and scratches are the most common physical hazards encountered when working with animals. In many cases, these physical hazards can be prevented by following safe practices that ensure proper animal handling. An accident may appear to be inconsequential, but complications may result, including infection or transmission of disease.

**Chemical Hazards**

Hazardous chemicals such as disinfectants, fixatives, pesticides, anesthetic gases, and toxic chemicals are commonly used for experimental purposes and require cautious handling. When using such chemicals, personnel should wear appropriate personal protective equipment, and be familiar with the information summarized in the specific Material Safety Data Sheets. (Chemicals should be labelled with key information, and the MSDS are available via a QR code posted in each lab room).

**Ergonomics**

Because repetitive motion, such as cleaning cages by hand, can produce small stresses that may lead to cumulative injuries, tasks should be varied to reduce the number of repetitions. Because lifting heavy bags of food or large volumes of water may contribute to back injuries, properly designed equipment should be used to assist with such tasks.

**Sharps**

Sharps such as needles, scalpels, or razor blades, pose a risk for personnel. In addition to physical injury, there may be biological or chemical hazard. Special care is needed when using these to avoid injuries. Puncture-resistant, leak-proof disposal containers are available wherever sharps are being used.

**Zoonotics**

Unless experimentally infected with a zoonotic agent -- a disease agent that can be transferred from animal to human -- laboratory research animals generally carry a limited number of infectious microorganisms of concern to animal users. This is mainly due to the existence of preventative medicine programs and the use of pathogen-free laboratory-bred animals. Although small, the risk of infection between laboratory animals and humans does exist and must be recognized to avoid exposure. For example, dwarf hamsters may carry *Giardia*.

Wild-caught research animals pose a greater possibility of zoonotic hazard. Care in proper handling, protective equipment, and personal hygiene is necessary. For example, birds and reptiles may harbor *Salmonella*, and wild rodents may carry hantavirus. Specific immunizations may be required for working on some projects.

Zoonotic agents generally pose a higher risk to immunosuppressed people, pregnant people, children, and the elderly. Other conditions that may put an individual at increased risk include chronic liver, respiratory, or kidney disease, and heart problems. Special care must be taken to avoid contact between vulnerable people and infectious agents of animal origin.

**Biohazards**

Research projects may involve the use of biohazardous agents as part of their study design. The area where these agents are used has restricted access and specific additional safety regulations and protocols are enforced.

Adapted from Cornell University Animal Users Health and Safety Program Booklet.