

Policy for Providing Vivarium Access to Visitors



**RESEARCH ANIMAL RESOURCE CENTER
MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING CANCER CENTER
WEILL CORNELL MEDICINE
HOSPITAL FOR SPECIAL SURGERY**

Policy for Providing Animal Facility Access to Visitors

I. Overview

The Research Animal Resource Center (RARC) requires that all personnel have prior approval before entering the vivarium as they may be exposed to animal dander, waste, or other hazards inherent with the use of animals. The purpose of this policy is to educate visitors about potential risks and provide guidance to ensure personal safety in addition to describing the process to gain access.

1. Visitors requesting access must read this policy as well as the [Occupational Health and Safety Guideline for Animal Research](#) (Appendix 1), and then complete either:
 - a. [Waiver for Observers](#) (Appendix 2): Observing animal areas or procedures; or,
 - b. [Waiver for Contractors/Vendors](#) (Appendix 3): Servicing equipment/supplies (no animal contact)
2. A RARC staff member will determine if there are any particular health concerns, training, and/or personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements required for access.
3. The visitor may be required to provide proof of medical clearance for restricted areas.
 - a. The visitor should consult with their personal medical provider to complete any necessary requirements or obtain records of testing, prior to the time of entry.
 - b. For contractors/vendors, the company employing the visitor is responsible for the cost and scheduling required for occupational medical evaluations.
4. Visitors that are immunosuppressed, pregnant, suffering from a chronic illness, or prone to animal allergies should consult with their personal physician before entering the vivarium.
5. Researchers that handle animals are required by law to be qualified or/and trained to handle the species they intend to use. Visitors **cannot** handle animals.
6. Individuals with prior rodent contact are required to disclose and avoid those activities for 24 hours prior to entering a RARC vivarium. This includes pets, and dead or live rodents used for feed.
7. PPE requirements must be followed as indicated when entering and within the vivarium. If an existing medical condition prevents the use of required PPE, the individual may not access to the area.
8. Visitors are not permitted to use image, video, or audio recording devices within the vivarium without special authorization from the RARC's Executive or Deputy Director.
9. Visitors may only enter the areas indicated on the approved waiver during the specified time period. Guests cannot accompany a visitor. Each visitor must complete an appropriate waiver and receive authorization to enter the vivarium.

II. Hazardous Material Areas

1. In addition to the requirements above, visitors accessing a hazardous material area must:
 - a. Complete the [Hazardous Use Area Rules for Visitors to the Vivarium](#) document.
 - b. Comply with the PPE and safety precautions indicated on signage for the area.
 - c. Adhere to any additional occupational health and safety requirements required to access the area, and provide evidence that the requirement has been met (e.g, vaccination).
2. **Non-human Primate (NHP) Areas**
(includes dirty side cagewash in NHP buildings)
 1. In addition to the requirements in Section I., persons requiring access to NHP areas must:
 - a. Complete the [Nonhuman Primate Safety](#) online video (annual requirement).
 - b. Provide proof of a negative TB assessment within one year of access.
 - c. Provide proof of a measles immunization or positive titer.

Occupational Health and Safety Guideline for Animal Research

The health and safety of personnel working with and in the vicinity of animals used in research is of utmost concern. This appendix provides basic information related to risks associated with research animals, including allergens, animal waste, hazardous materials, and/or sharp objects.

EXPOSURE RISKS

Laboratory Animal Allergy: Laboratory animal allergy affects up to 40% of research personnel. Animal allergy develops due to exposure through skin contact or inhalation of allergens from fur, dander, saliva, urine, serum, or other body products. It may also result from indirect exposure to contaminated objects such as cages, bedding, equipment, and clothing. The development and severity of an allergy depends on genetic predisposition, as well as duration and frequency of exposure. Symptoms can include wheezing, sneezing, rhinitis, itching of eyes and skin, hives and, if severe, anaphylaxis, which could, if not treated quickly, result in death. If they occur, these symptoms should be reported to your health care provider. Proper use of PPE aids in the reduction of allergen exposure and prevents allergens from being carried out of the vivarium on hair or clothing.

ZOONOTIC INFECTION

Although humans are not commonly affected by diseases carried by animals, virtually every laboratory animal species may carry a pathogen that can infect humans. Below are examples associated with species housed within the vivarium.

Rodents: Contact with rodents requires general safety precautions. Tetanus immunization is required as prophylaxis against bite wounds for individuals handling rodents.

Nonhuman Primates: Due to their genetic similarity, non-human primates often carry diseases that are transmissible to humans. This include tuberculosis and measles as well as enteric infections such as *Shigella* spp., *Campylobacter* spp., and *Salmonella* spp. Additionally, Macacine herpesvirus 1 (B virus), which can be carried by macaque monkeys, can cause a fatal encephalitis in humans. An injury associated with a macaque or soiled caging used to house them requires **immediate medical attention**.

Other Species: Influenza in ferrets, Q fever in sheep, erysipelas in swine, and mycobacteriosis in zebrafish are additional examples of infections that may pose a potential risk to staff in those animal housing areas.

TRAUMA

Seek medical treatment immediately if you are bitten or scratched by an animal, or scratched by a contaminated piece of equipment. There are standard procedures for managing both trauma and potential transmission of infection. Complications from bite wounds include tenosynovitis, septic arthritis, osteomyelitis, abscesses, and fatal sepsis. Infections are most likely to develop when wounds preclude thorough cleansing, wounds are on the hands, or if there is a delay in seeking treatment.

PREVENTION

Staff who regularly work with laboratory animals are evaluated annually to assess risk factors such as immune system compromise, allergies, and pregnancy. The following measures are recommended to minimize the risks related to exposure to laboratory animals.

TB Surveillance - NHPs may carry or be infected by TB (annually).

Tetanus – Vaccination is recommended for all personnel using animals (every ten years).

Hepatitis B – Human or NHP fluids, or human xenograft tissue may contain the virus.

Rubeola - NHPs are very susceptible to measles infection.

PPE – PPE is worn at all times while in the vivarium.

MISCELLANEOUS

Do not attempt to lift heavy objects without training or assistance. Be alert for wet and slippery floors. Use caution in disposing of broken glass.

Waiver for Outside Contractors/Vendors

Company/Institution: _____ Escort/Point of Contact: _____

Visitor Name: _____ Email: _____

Are you over 18? Yes No Date: _____

Room(s) to be entered: _____

Hazard: Yes No

NHP Area: Yes No

If Yes to either, complete the [Supplementary Clearance Form](#)

History of any animal allergies: Yes No If yes, species: _____

If yes, are you allergic to the species in the area you are requesting access? Yes No

- A. I understand that I am only authorized to areas indicated above, during the time period specified. I must comply with all RARC and institutional policies, procedures, and requirements for the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) when entering and working in the areas indicated.
- B. I understand that I am not to handle or come in direct contact with any rodents (live or dead) for 24 hours prior to entering a RARC vivarium.
- C. I have read, understand, and will comply with the "*Policy for Providing Vivarium Access to Visitors.*"

Visitor: _____
Print Signature

Visitor's Manager: _____
Print Signature

RARC USE ONLY

Access Approval:

Building/Room: _____

Date of access: _____ to _____

RARC Approval: _____ Date: _____
APPROVER NAME

- ☐ Supplementary Clearance Form Approved by EQA (only NHP or hazard areas)
- ☐ File with facility manager
- ☐ File with facility veterinarian (only when large animal OR is being accessed)
- ☐ Digital Copy Saved on File

Restrictions: _____