## DLAM

Northeastern University Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine

|  |
| --- |
| **Procedure for Animal Bites and Scratches and Other Animal-Related Injuries** |

**Purpose:** Standard Operating Procedure for Animal Bites and Scratches and Other Animal-Related Injuries

**Responsibility:** Animal Technicians, faculty, staff, students.

**Introduction**

The intent of this standard operating procedure (SOP) is to describe how to treat animal related injuries. This SOP is intended for use by all personnel who handle animals, or materials that come into contact with animal bodily fluids or tissues. Animal bites and exposures are defined by having one’s skin scraped or pierced by animal teeth or claws, or by coming into contact with animal saliva or tissue on non-intact skin, eyes or mucous membranes. Bites and scratches can be potentially dangerous from both the physical damage but also from the potential of allergic reactions or by exposure to pathogens and/or research materials. All animal bites and exposures must be reported to your Principal Investigator, the Director of the Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine (DLAM) and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S).

**Bite Prevention**

In a laboratory setting, the following procedures will help minimize the potential for bites and exposures:

* Ensure you are properly trained on how to safely handle the animal species you are working with. Animal bites can be largely preventable through proper training in animal handling and general restraint techniques. If additional training is needed, contact the DLAM for help.
* If an animal shows signs of or has a history of aggression, extra caution must be taken when working with that animal. Additional personal protective equipment (e.g. leather gloves, etc.) can be used. Cages housing known aggressive animals are to be labeled with a caution sign to identify the aggressive animal. Personnel must also notify DLAM staff and other members of their lab about the behavior so the necessary precautions can be taken when handling that animal.

**Post Bite Procedures**

1. Place the animal back in its cage, try to make the wound bleed, and immediately one must wash the wound with soap and water for 15 minutes. After washing, dry it and apply antibiotic ointment and cover it with a clean bandage. If it continues to bleed, apply pressure to stop the bleeding. Band aides and antibiotic ointment are provided in each animal care facility.
2. One should call NUPD at (617)-373-3333 or via the SafeZone app for help. NUPD will assess your condition and will assist you in seeking medical attention if it is needed.
3. If emergency treatment is not required, instead the person who was bitten should call Occupational & Environmental Health Network (OEHN) at (866)-360-8100 to speak with an occupational health physician for a medical consultation about the injury/exposure to determine if care is needed. Be sure to provide all relevant information about the animals and research materials that were used with the animal so that a full assessment can be complete.
4. One must notify your Principal Investigator, the DLAM Director ([s.sullivan@northeastern.edu](mailto:s.sullivan@northeastern.edu)) and Environmental Health and Safety ([ehs@northeastern.edu](mailto:ehs@northeastern.edu)) about the incident. Some exposures require reporting to local and state public health agency.

**First Aid Kit**

A First-Aid kit must be located in an obvious, readily available location in all work areas. The location of the first aid kit will be pointed out to all personnel during their initial facility orientation. The facility manager or their designee is responsible for maintaining the first-aid kit and checking the contents expiration dates. Contents must include:

* Sterile gauze pads
* Adhesive tape
* Band-Aids
* Topical antibiotic ointment

**Signs of Infection and Animal Bite Related Disease**

Symptoms of infection after exposure:

* Inflammation and redness around the bite wound
* Yellow or green discharge and/or odor coming from the wound
* Red streaks on the skin around the wound
* Fever and chills
* Aches and pains
* Nausea and/or vomiting
* Polyarthralgia (pain in multiple joints)

Laboratory mice and rats used at Northeastern University exclude all zoonotic agents and most common rodent pathogens. Therefore, there is limited concern for disease from these research animals. There is, however, always concern about secondary infections that can occur with bites and scratches. Common skin, intestinal, and soil bacteria present on you or the animal can infect the scratch or bite wound and cause these secondary infections. Thus, handle all animals with care, always perform first aid, and immediately seek medical consultation for severe wounds that appear to be infected.

Rats can carry a bacterium, *Streptobacillus moniliformis* or *Spirillum minor*, that causes Rat-Bite Fever. Symptoms include chills, fever, malaise, headache and muscle pain. A rash can develop along with painful joints, abscesses, endocarditis, pneumonia, hepatitis pyelonephritis, and enteritis.

**Reporting an Animal Bite**

If the bite exposure is from a naive or unadulterated animal, meaning the animal has never been treated with any chemical or biological agents previously, then the bite still must be reported to the PI, Director of DLAM and EH&S, but a report to the city does not need to be generated. If the bite is from a laboratory animal that has been treated with biological or chemical agents, then a report to The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) will be needed. Once EH&S is notified, they will be in charge of reporting the bite to the city and an incident follow-up report. The link below will be used to report all laboratory animal bites.

**Contacts and Links**

Northeastern University Police Department (NUPD): (617) 373-3333 or using the emergency button on the SafeZone app

Occupational Health Provider: Occupational & Environmental Health Network (OEHN): (866) 360-8100

Director, Division of Laboratory Animal Medicine (DLAM): Sean Sullivan: s.sullivan@northeastern.edu

Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S): (617) 373-2769 or [ehs@northeastern.edu](mailto:ehs@northeastern.edu)