This information sheet is for the care and use of Rabbits

Potential Injury and Zoonotic Diseases:

Rabbits are generally docile animals that are easy to handle and pose minimal risks of contracting a zoonotic disease to laboratory personnel and animal care staff. The development of disease in the human host often requires a preexisting state that has compromised the immune system. If you have an immune-compromising medical condition or you are taking medications that impair your immune system (steroids, immunosuppressive drugs, or chemotherapy), you are at higher risk for contracting a rabbit disease and should consult your physician. The primary concern when working with rabbits is developing allergies and injuries from scratches and bites. Prior to your assignment, you should receive training in specific handling techniques and specific protective clothing requirements. The following is a list of known and potential rabbit zoonoses.

Pasteurella multocida: This bacteria lives in the oral cavity or upper respiratory tract of rabbits. Human infection is generally associated with a rabbit bite or scratch. Human infection is generally local inflammation around the bite or scratch, possibly leading to abscess formation with systemic symptoms.

Cryptosporidiosis: An extracellular protozoal organism, cryptospordium is transmitted via the fecal-oral route; waterborne transmission is also important. In humans, infection varies from no symptoms to mild gastrointestinal symptoms to marked watery diarrhea. The infection is generally self-limited and lasts a few days to about 2 weeks. In immunocompromised individuals, the illness is more severe.

Other Potential Diseases Associated with rabbits: While none of the following are commonly associated with laboratory rabbits, these diseases are associated with rabbits. *Brucella suis biotype 2, cheyletiella infestation, francisella tularensis, plague, Q-fever*, and *trichophyton mentagrophytes*.

Allergic Reactions to Rabbits: Allergies to rabbit fur and dander are well documented. A major glycoprotein allergen can occur in the fur of rabbits and minor allergenic components found in rabbit saliva and urine have been identified as sources of allergies. If you have symptoms you are strongly advised to contact the Occupational Health Coordinator at 949-824-3757 to discuss this issue and arrange for follow-up with an occupational health physician.

Tell your physician you work with rabbits. Whenever you are ill, even if you're not certain that the illness is work-related, always mention to your physician that you work with rabbits. Many zoonotic diseases have flu-like symptoms and would not normally be suspected. Your physician needs this information to make an accurate diagnosis. Questions regarding personal human health should be answered by your physician.

Seek Medical Attention Promptly. If you are injured on the job, promptly report the accident to your supervisor even if it seems relatively minor. Minor cuts and abrasions should be immediately cleansed with antibacterial soap and then protected from exposure to animals and their housing materials. For more serious injuries seek medical services through Workers Compensation by calling (949) 824-9152 or visiting their website at http://www.hr.uci.edu/

For treatment locations http://www.ehs.uci.edu/MedEmergPoster.pdf

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SPECIES	BIOLOGICAL HAZARD/PATHOGEN	ROUTE OF TRANSMISSION	CLINICAL SYMPTOMS	PREVENTION/ PROPHYLAXIS	MEDICAL SURVEILLANCE REQUIRED	RISKS FOR EXPOSURE AT UCI
Rabbits	Brucella suis biotype 2	Contact with animal and newborn animal, ingestion of animal products, inhalation of airborne agents, contaminated food and water	Fever, chills, profuse sweating, weakness, insomnia, constipation, anorexia, headache, arthralgia, general malaise, irritation, nervousness, depression	Personal hygiene, use of protective clothes, and disinfectants	No	No at UCI - Case reports from China of Brucella spp in rabbit handlers
Rabbits	Cheyletiella infestation	Contact with infected animals	Mites causing papular, pruriginous dermatitis on arms, thorax, waist, thighs.	PPE, personal hygiene, repellants.	No	No
Rabbits	Francisella tularensis	Ingestion of contaminated water and food, aerosols, scratch, bite, tick	Rising and falling fever, chills, asthenia, joint and muscle pain, cephalalgia, vomiting, ulceroglandular	Wear protective clothing, protection of food and water	No	Yes
Rabbits	Plague	Flea bite, skin abrasions or bites	Fever, chills, cephalalgia, nausea, generalized pain, diarrhea, constipation, toxemia, shock, arterial hypotension, rapid pulse, anxiety, staggering gait, slurred speech, mental confusion, prostration	Flea and rodent control. PPE	No	No
Rabbits	Q-fever	Aerosols, birthing by-products, dust, leather, wool, tick bite	Fever, chills, profuse sweating, malaise, anorexia, myalgia, nausea, vomiting, cephalalgia, retroorbital pain, slight cough, mild expectoration, chest pain	PPE, personal hygiene, Vaccine not available in USA.	Q-fever Titer Yes	No
Rabbits	Trichophyton mentagrophytes	Contact with skin, spores contained in the hair and dermal scales shed by the animal	Inflamatory dermatophytosis	Avoid contact with wild animal, isolate sick animal and treat with topical antimycotics or griseofulvin administered orally, and remains of hair and scales should be burned and rooms, stables, and all utensils should be disinfected	No	Yes

References:

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