Working Safely With Felines

This information is provided to assist you in understanding the potential occupational hazards when working with cats and the need in some instances to take precautions to minimize the potential for animal-to-human zoonotic disease.

Possible risks when working with cats
Potential illnesses associated with cats include Bartonella henselae, Rabies and Toxoplasma gondii. Cats used in research have been vaccinated against rabies. However, it may be prudent to consider prophylactic immunization. Cats may release microorganisms such as Salmonella and parasites such as Toxoplasma in the feces. Any personnel working with cats must wash their hands with disinfectant hand soap before leaving the facility. Cats, like most mammals, can shed fur so anyone with allergies to fur, dander or animal bedding should wear personal protective clothing to minimize discomfort. Cats may also carry biting insects, such as fleas, so personal protective equipment may also be used in this instance as well. Bites and scratches may also pose serious problems through trauma and/or bacterial infection.

Cat bites, scratches, or injuries from objects contaminated with body fluids require immediate first aid and medical attention.

Recommended personnel protective equipment (PPE)
Gloves and a laboratory coat (or other dedicated protective clothing such as a scrub suit) must be worn when working with cats. Do not eat, drink, or apply cosmetics while working in an animal use area, and always wash your hands after handling cats. Remember that tissues, blood, serum, urine, and other materials derived from cats may also pose a risk.

Cleaning and sanitization recommendations
Please contact LAMS Husbandry staff at (513) 558-5171.

Contact Environmental Health & Safety at (513) 556-4968 for any concerns or questions you have about working with dogs or any vertebrate animal and occupational risks. Help with training personnel in specific work practices to minimize risk can be obtained by contacting the LAMS Husbandry Staff at (513) 558-5171.