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An essential component of vivarium management is the implementation of an effective security program. Restricting access to the animal facility is important as it protects investigators, animal care staff, and the animals from intruders who may intend harm, protects the health status of the animals, and protects unauthorized visitors from exposure to hazards. The welfare of the animals and integrity of the research requires well-planned access control.

Importance of Building Security

Animal Rights Organizations

While there are many reasons that an effective and uncompromising security program is vital for a research animal facility, protection from animal rights activists is one of the most important. Animal use in biomedical research continues to be a controversial topic and is frequently scrutinized by animal rights organizations. Historically, the University of Illinois at Chicago and its investigators have not been a focus of these organizations, but other universities, especially those in southern California, have been targeted. The actions carried out by animal rights groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) range from release of research animals and destruction of vivarium property to threats and physical attacks on investigators' homes, vehicles, and families. Protecting staff and research programs from extremist groups is a fundamental goal of our security program.

The Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act (AETA) is a law that gives the US Department of Justice the necessary authority to apprehend, prosecute, and convict individuals committing animal enterprise terror. An "animal enterprise" includes academic and commercial enterprises that use or sell animals, including research institutions such as UIC. This law prohibits force, violence, and threats against animal enterprises by penalizing those

who damage or interfere with animal enterprises or conspire or attempt to interfere with an animal enterprise. It also prohibits any person from intentionally damaging the property of a person affiliated with an animal enterprise. This law allows strong penalties for intentionally causing or intentionally placing a person in reasonable fear of bodily injury or death because of his/her connection to an animal enterprise. It also allows animal enterprises to seek restitution; for example, under the law a research facility could seek restitution for the cost of repeating an experiment that was ruined by an animal activism activity. However, the law does not prohibit expressive conduct, including peaceful picketing or other peaceful demonstrations, which is protected from legal prohibition by the First Amendment to the Constitution. If you feel that you have been threatened or otherwise affected by animal extremists, you may be protected by the AETA and are urged to contact UIC police.

Regulatory Requirements

The presence of an effective vivarium security program, which includes controlled access to animal areas, is also important from a regulatory standpoint. Some of the studies conducted at UIC involve contract research, requiring laboratories to follow the US Food and Drug Administration's Good Laboratory Practices. These practices mandate restricted access to animal rooms to prevent unauthorized contact with animals, altering of research data, as well as theft of data.

In the past, UIC investigators have conducted studies that involve the use of Select Agents (SAs) or High Consequence Pathogens (HCPs). SAs are biological agents or toxins that the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) considers to have the potential to pose a severe threat to human health, while HCPs are those that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers to have the potential to pose a severe threat to animal or plant health. The USA

Patriot Act of 2001 places restrictions on persons who possess SAs, and provides criminal penalties for possession of such agents that cannot be justified for specified peaceful purposes. The Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness Response Act of 2002 requires that all persons possessing SAs notify HHS, while all persons possessing HCPs notify the USDA. There are many requirements that must be met before being allowed to work with SAs or HCPs. The user must register with either the HHS or USDA and receive government approval. The registration process includes providing the government with the names of specific SAs or HCPs that will be used, a list of activities that will occur, the activity locations, as well as the names of all individuals who will work with the materials and will need access to the approved locations. The listed individuals must complete a background check before they are allowed access to SAs or HCPs. As part of the registration process, the government inspects the facility where SA or HCP work is to be performed to ensure it meets safety and security requirements. The inspection process includes verifying that there is controlled access to secure areas, that the staff is trained in security procedures, and that there is a protocol in place for an emergency response plan in case of a compromise in security. There are no current projects at UIC that involve the use of SAs or HCPs. However, any such study under consideration must be discussed with the Directors of the BRL and EHSO well in advance of submission of a proposal to a funding source.

Health and Safety

Animal care programs are required by the USDA to have an occupational health and safety program. An integral component of an occupational health and safety program is the control of hazard exposure, which can be implemented by limiting access to rooms that may contain research involving chemical, radiation, or biological hazards. Controlled access helps prevent accidental entry by those who have not been trained in the safe handling of these hazards and may be unaware of the inherent risks. Limiting access to animal rooms also protects the health status of research animals as increased traffic through animal areas can lead to spread of infectious disease from contaminated individuals.

UIC Security Program Procedures

Controlled Access

The key to security at UIC is to allow access only to authorized users. Access to animal areas is controlled in several ways. In order to access the main animal facility (BRL) and the full-service, multi-user satellite facilities, an authorized magnetic card (UIC i-card) must be swiped through a card reader. Once inside the facility there are other measures in place to further increase security. Individual animal rooms and investigator areas are locked so only individuals who have been given keys are able to enter. Entry to the rodent barriers in the BRL and COMRB facilities as well as the nonhuman primate colony is controlled through card access. In addition, the BRL elevators require a key to gain access to the primate floor to ensure the safety of both the primates as well as personnel.

Obtaining Authorized Access

Access to UIC animals facilities is granted only after the following steps are completed, allowing only those people who have been properly trained to work in the facility. First, all research staff requiring access to an animal facility must be listed on an Animal Care Committee (ACC) approved animal use protocol. New staff may be added to an existing animal use protocol by submitting Form D. Second, research staff must complete the required online animal user training entitled "Animals and Research at UIC." Completion of an additional online training module entitled "Working with Mice and Rats at UIC" is required for all research staff using these species. Both of these training modules can be accessed at the ACC website (<http://research.uic.edu/compliance/acc>), and require secure login with a UIC NetID. Third, individuals must meet with a veterinarian and complete an orientation of the animal area in which they will be working. The content of the orientation is targeted to the animal species, and may include a review of common standard operating procedures and potential health risks. Finally, all individuals who work with animals must be enrolled in the UIC occupational health and safety program, which includes a health assessment at University Health Services. Once the above steps are completed, the building

access form may be submitted to the BRL business office with access usually granted within several business days.

Other Security Practices

Along with controlling access to animal areas, other measures have been put into practice to ensure the security and safety of all investigators, employees, and animals. One such measure is surveillance cameras at entry/exit points to monitor traffic in and out of the BRL, COMRB, and MBRB facilities. The video feed is recorded and web-based, giving UIC police the ability to monitor these facilities remotely if needed. While this measure will not prevent a break-in, it is a useful tool to determine if and when certain individuals were on the premises. Additionally, all campus buildings have a direct alert system to UIC police for immediate response to emergency situations (i.e., fire). All buildings that contain animal facilities are also linked to the campus wide security notification system which broadcasts instructions in case of a crisis situation. The Director of the BRL has developed a written Crisis Management Plan that is updated on an annual basis. Included in this plan are the steps taken to manage an act of animal rights activism on UIC property.

UIC Police Collaboration

The relationship between the BRL and UIC police is a two-way street; UIC police keep BRL management informed of animal rights activity they encounter, while BRL management notifies UIC police of information they may have on local animal rights activism. Members of the BRL staff and UIC police meet on a regular basis specifically to discuss the issue of security in UIC animal facilities. This allows the BRL staff to keep UIC police informed of facility updates including changes in key personnel to contact in case of an emergency.

Hiring and Background Checks

For BRL employees, specific questions are asked during the interview process to determine whether an applicant has a negative impression of biomedical research. Background checks are performed on all BRL employees prior to employment in order to ensure the safety of others and to detect potential infiltration by someone with

a history of involvement in animal rights activism. Through this screening process, BRL management ensures that the threat of infiltration by an animal rights activist is low. However, we do not control the hiring of the majority of individuals who work in campus research facilities, including research technicians, graduate students, or undergraduate student workers. It is important to ask potential employees their thoughts on animal rights, the use of animals in research, and euthanasia of animals following completion of a study. It is important to keep in mind that once employees are given access to an animal facility, they may be able to gain access to other investigators' animals and impact a multitude of on-going projects by their actions.

Investigator Responsibilities

Achieving maximum security in campus animal facilities requires a joint effort between animal facility employees and investigative staff. There are several preventive measures that can be taken by anyone who has access to an animal facility. Doors should never be propped open, including doors at the facility entrances as well as doors to animal rooms. If you see a door that has been propped open, it is your responsibility to close it. Don't allow an unknown individual to "tailgate" or enter the facility behind you after you swiped your card. Don't share your i-card with others, including people in your lab. Anyone who needs to enter an animal facility must acquire authorization after completing the required orientation and training. If you see a suspicious individual or suspicious activities occurring in animal areas, report them immediately to a veterinarian, husbandry supervisor, or the UIC police. Remember, if something doesn't look right, it probably isn't.

Visitor Policy

People, including other UIC employees and family members, who are not authorized to enter an animal facility should not be brought in for any reason. Individuals who have not been trained on standard operating procedures or health risks may jeopardize research projects, animal health, or their own health and safety. In addition, the presence of unfamiliar people is a source of

stress to the animals and adds an experimental variable that is easily avoided. This policy is especially important with regards to the experimental surgery suite, rodent barrier, and nonhuman primate area. The experimental surgery area within the BRL operates under strict aseptic procedures. Untrained individuals risk contaminating the area, exposing themselves to hazards associated with the animals or on-going surgical procedures, endangering the animals undergoing surgery, as well as compromising the projects of UIC investigators. The barrier rooms in the BRL and COMRB maintain rodents that are free of pathogens that significantly impact research results. The process of eradicating these agents took two years to accomplish given the large number of mouse strains housed on campus. An unauthorized individual has a high likelihood of being a potential source of contamination for the BRL rodent colonies by, for example, having exposure to pet or wild rodents. Finally, no visitors are allowed in the nonhuman primate area without prior notification of the primate veterinarian. Only visitors participating in collaborative research efforts or conducting a site review for funding or regulatory purposes may enter the primate area. These individuals must provide proof of negative tuberculosis status prior to entry. The risk for transmission of disease (herpes B virus, measles, experimental infectious disease) between the primates and humans and vice versa is substantial.

It is important to distinguish educational outreach from unauthorized visitors. The veterinary staff supports outreach that educates the public on the responsible use of animals in research. There is an open door policy for individuals who wish to tour the BRL and ask questions. They may schedule a tour after making arrangements with the Director of the BRL. Further, it is BRL policy that children under the age of 18 are never allowed to enter areas beyond the administrative office, unless specifically approved by the Director of the BRL.

Photography and Online Security

The taking of photographs is strictly prohibited in UIC animal facilities. Do not take photographs inside the animal facilities, even of your own animals or research areas, unless specifically

approved by the Director of the BRL. If photographs are required for scientific media, please contact the Director of the BRL. If photographs are required for a news release, please contact UIC public relations as well as the Director of the BRL. Despite the ban on photography, images of animals, animal research procedures, or personnel have occasionally been inappropriately posted on social media websites. If these sites are discovered or reported, the ACC and veterinary staff will investigate and request the images to be removed. Such photographs are often misinterpreted by the general public and can bring unwanted attention from animal rights groups. In order to protect the animals, research and animal care personnel, and the biomedical research program at UIC, photographs from inside animal research facilities must never be posted online.

In conclusion, ensuring the safety and health of investigative staff, animal care staff, and the animals themselves, is a top priority. By following the rules and being vigilant about preventive safety measures, we can all do our part to ensure a safe working environment for ourselves and others.

Announcements

On January 31st, after 20 years of service, Mohammed Iqbal also known as "Ike" retired from UIC and the BRL. Ike played an integral role in department's billing process and he will definitely be missed. Enjoy your retirement along the relaxing beaches of Florida. You deserve it! Moving forward should investigators have a question regarding a bill please send it to brlbsnsoffc@uic.edu.

Wednesday, April 19th, is Biomedical Research Awareness Day. Over 50 academic institutions, including UIC, are taking part in this informational event. If you have time on Wednesday please come by the lobby in College of Medicine West and pick up some free goodies and informational resources on the importance of biomedical research. Hope to see you there.