

Zoonotic Disease Procedure

Introduction of Responsibility

The information given below should be used to formulate a risk-assessed plan for an annual programme of zoonotic control document. This document should be regularly appraised if new sections of animals are included in a collection (e.g. if the collection previously did not keep non-human primates but then decided to do so).

Higher risk situations that require increased levels of surveillance and proactive hygiene measures would be where the public has close contact with animals in an exhibit (e.g. walk through exhibits and touch pools). Where animals are kept strictly separated from the public so as to prevent close contact, and where those animals have been bred in captivity and in Balai approved premises, the level of surveillance and proactive hygiene measures may be lessened. However, simple hygiene measures, such as adequate close-by hand washing facilities, as well as protective overalls used when cleaning pens etc should be provided for the staff to comply with Health and Safety regulations.

As mentioned a regular health programme for all staff in contact with animals is also advised, with vaccination against relevant preventable diseases offered.

General Guidelines

1. Legislation and Definitions

COSHH

[The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health \(COSHH\) Regulations 2002](#) (as amended) define zoonoses as biological agents or 'micro-organisms which may cause infections or otherwise create a hazard to human health'. They require individuals to carry out a risk assessment of all hazardous agents in order to protect employees and the wider public which has access.

Further assessments then need to be made and according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) should include the following:

- the pathogen/zoonotic organism present;
- what form it takes;
- the diseases it may cause;
- how it is transmitted;
- the likelihood of exposure and subsequent disease which will require an assessment of the workers/public likely to be in-contact e.g. those who may be immunocompromised;
- the control measures to be applied;
- the provision of information to employees and the use of medical contact cards;
- the need for monitoring procedures including health surveillance of all staff (including needs to vaccinate e.g. hepatitis virus vaccination, BCG and rabies).

Health and Safety Executive

Schedule 3 of the [Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 \(RIDDOR\)](#) lists specific diseases caused by biological agents that must be reported and includes:

- Anthrax;
- Avian and Ovine chlamydophilosis;
- Brucellosis;
- Leptospirosis;
- Rabies;
- Tuberculosis;
- Any infection reliably attributable to work with animals or any potentially infected animal material.

2. Hand Washing

i. Signs should be present and clearly visible by hand washing facilities and should encourage members of the public and handlers alike to use them properly and not to smoke or consume food whilst in the so-called 'touch' exhibit.

ii. Staff involved in 'touch' exhibits should be advising any members of the public involved in close contact to wash their hands immediately afterwards.

iii. All staff should be regularly briefed as to the risks of zoonotic spread in animals under their care and the necessary preventative measures to be taken.

iv. Hand washing facilities should be present at the entrance to and exit from 'touch' exhibits. These should be at least comprised of an alcohol based antiseptic dispenser and preferably (as per HSE guidelines) running warm water plus soap/liquid hand wash. If towels are supplied they must be disposable or alternatively a hot-air drier may be used.

v. Hand washing facilities and signage should also be present where there are no formal 'touch' exhibits but where the public could potentially come into contact with animals.

3. Categories of People to be controlled in 'Touch' Exhibits

These include the following categories of people:

- Children under the age of 5 should be accompanied by a responsible adult who will prevent or control contact with the animals. Those less than 1 year old should not be allowed to touch animals at all and should each have one responsible adult accompanying them.
- Immunocompromised people such as those suffering from HIV, those on immunosuppressive chemotherapy or corticosteroid medication. In addition for certain exhibits where e.g. Toxoplasmosis may be a risk, pregnant women should be warned of the increased risks for them.

4. Staff Working in Exhibits

Staff should be advised to maintain their rabies, TB and tetanus vaccinations if working with animals. It is also sensible to offer annual health checks for staff or at least advise they seek medical advice should they become unwell where it is suspected the source may be an animal they work with. For those working with non-human primates it is advisable to ensure staff is also vaccinated for hepatitis B.