

## Animal-related Allergies and Asthma

Animal-related allergies or asthma are reactions of the body’s immune system to animal proteins, also known as allergens. Sources of these allergens include animal dander, scales, fur, body wastes, serum, and saliva.

Inhalation is the most common route for allergens to enter the body. After a period of time, individuals may inhale enough allergens to become sensitized. Once sensitized, the individual will experience an allergic reaction when exposed to the allergen again. Protecting yourself from exposure to allergens will decrease your risk of developing animal-related allergies or asthma.

### Symptoms of an allergic reaction -

- Chest tightness
- Itchy, watery eyes
- Itchy, runny nose
- Rash or hives
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing

### How to protect yourself from exposure to allergens –

- When performing animal manipulations or handling used bedding, do so within a biosafety cabinet or ventilated hood.
- Avoid wearing street clothes while working with animals and leave work clothes at the workplace.
- Reduce skin contact with animal products by using the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, lab coat, and eye protection. (*If you have an animal-related allergy or asthma, you may wish to use respiratory protection.*)
- Keep cages and animal areas clean.
- Use ventilated animal cage racks or filter-top animal cages.
- Wash your hands after exiting animal areas.
- Shower after working with animals.

### Biosafety Occupational Health Program (BOHP) –

Individuals at risk of exposure to allergens through the course of their participation in, or operational support of, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) permitted research, teaching or diagnostic activities are required to enroll in the [Biosafety Occupational Health Program \(BOHP\)](#).

Individuals enrolled in the BOHP have access to occupational health services, such as respiratory protection for mitigating potential exposure to allergens and personal health consultations with the University’s occupational health provider.

For questions or concerns regarding animal-related allergies or asthma, contact [bohpt@tamu.edu](mailto:bohpt@tamu.edu).