



University of Cambridge

UBS Wearing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy

This policy applies to all University Biomedical Services (UBS) staff working with laboratory animals.

For health and wellbeing reasons a risk based approach is taken to minimise the exposure of UBS staff to laboratory animal allergens (LAAs). It is reasonably predicted that 'open cage work' activities pose the greatest risk of exposure and therefore appropriate RPE must be worn. These activities include but are not limited to: all work in 'conventional' caging type areas, individual ventilated cage (IVC) changing and any other activity or interaction when an IVC must be opened (such as detailed health checks, administration of substances or weaning procedures), fur clipping, cage scraping or washing, waste disposal and cleaning or maintenance of any filters or ventilated extract systems (such as cage change stations and IVC air handling units). The requirement is that RPE will be worn by all UBS staff and will include times when present in the room or area when open cage activity is being, or has likely recently been, undertaken by any individual.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and associated safety documents must be adhered to when working with laboratory animals. These contain instruction and guidance on the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and RPE that must be worn for the activity described. As a minimum this policy must be adhered to for the wearing of RPE when working with laboratory animals in a UBS Facility.

There may be exemptions to wearing RPE, for example when working with certain species such as fish and large farm animals or in the course of some activities such as during surgery. However, these exemptions must be risk assessed, recorded and agreed with the appropriate UBS Facility Manager.

The University Allergy to Animals Policy and Guidance states that a minimum of RPE class FFP2 facemasks must be used. UBS offers a variety of disposable class FFP2 and FFP3 facemasks suited to different face shapes. When a local risk assessment and/or face fit test identifies that a disposable facemask is not suitable, for example due to facial hair that prevents a proper seal of the mask to the face, or where a task is very physical in nature or the environment is hot/uncomfortable, then the UBS staff member will be provided powered RPE and trained in its safe use. A face fit test is not required for powered RPE.

All applicable UBS staff working in facilities will have been offered a disposable RPE quantitative face fit test. New staff will be face fitted as part of their induction process. Powered RPE may be selected in preference to a face fit test for disposable RPE by a UBS staff member. Once made, this choice must be sustained. Exceptional circumstances for changing from powered to disposable RPE must be discussed with the Facility Manager and a face fit test undertaken.

As part of the induction process Occupational Health provide information regarding RPE. If increased risk of sensitivity to LAAs is identified Occupational Health may provide specific RPE advice (such as wearing a class FFP3 facemask as a minimum) and/or enhance monitoring of an individual. Such advice must be discussed with the appropriate Facility Manager and adhered to.

Additional Resources

All UBS staff working with laboratory animals are advised to read and be familiar with the following Occupational Health and Safety Service documents:

- The University Allergy to Animals Policy and Guidance
- Information for staff and students: Allergy to Animals, Insects and Arthropods
- Checking the Fit of your Face-Mask: A guide for using disposable 'dust' masks

Policy Expectations

The following must be adhered to:

Disposable RPE

If a face fit test is passed for a particular facemask type this model must be worn during all open cage activities. Fitting instructions are given at the face fit test and are available on the packaging of the mask. Further guidance and information on fitting and wearing disposable RPE is provided at the UBS Facility on posters and by the Facility Manager.

Once fitted, the facemask must be secured in place for the complete duration of all open cage activities. Facemasks should be appropriately fitted and maintained for a session or working shift as per the manufacturer instructions and then disposed of correctly. During breaks in use, if safe to reuse, disposable RPE must be stored carefully and correctly to maintain their cleanliness and effectiveness.

Where the appropriate disposable facemask is temporarily unavailable the Facility Manager must be consulted to determine what alternative RPE is suitable and what work can be undertaken.

Powered RPE

Powered RPE comes in a variety of model designs and options. However the principles are the same for each. Once fitted and operating, powered RPE must be secured in place for the complete duration of all open cage activities. A powered RPE user must ensure and record appropriate cleaning and maintenance inspections are carried out prior to and after use to confirm that the equipment is in good working order. This will include clear vision, the battery level, filter changing and efficient airflow. Manufacturer instructions will provide details on how to undertake the checks required for specific models. The UBS Facility Manager will provide powered RPE check record sheets and will ensure they are appropriately completed by the powered RPE user. When not in use powered RPE must be stored carefully and correctly so as to be clean and ready for the next operational period.

Declaration

I understand that wilful or continued failure to comply with this policy may result in formal action being undertaken.

I have read and understood the UBS Wearing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Policy.

Print name:

Signed:

Date:

Powered RPE: Yes/No

Disposable facemask Make/Model face fit test passed: