

Animal Bite and Scratch Protocol

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this policy is to provide education on animal bites and scratches, to outline the first aid, medical treatment, and post-treatment procedures for all Western University employees who sustain animal bites and scratches while working on Western campus or on projects conducted with association with Western University in the field. This policy pertains to all Western University employees.

INTRODUCTION

It is important to recognize that persons working with animals are at risk for animal bites and scratches in research animal populations, in the field, and when encountered in the workplace. All animal bites are potentially serious and require immediate first aid along with appropriate follow-up and reporting. Training in animal handling and incorporating appropriate control measures, including designated PPE, may reduce the incidence and/or severity of animal bites. Some work at Western University may result in being offered prophylactic vaccination (i.e. against rabies, influenza etc.)

All animals have potential pathogens in their oral flora, some can cause serious disease in humans when they are transmitted through a bite. Animals whose bites cause deep puncture wounds or who carry pathogens can cause life-threatening infections and must be handled with care to avoid getting bitten. If bites do occur, they must be assessed for location, depth, and signs of infection, along with host factors such as immunosuppression and comorbid disease. If known, the health of the animal involved is also considered in the formulation of a treatment plan. There is also risk in some animal scratches (i.e. bats) as they may carry illnesses that require assessment and need prophylactic treatment.

IMMEDIATE FIRST AID PROCEDURE:

1. The wound should be washed immediately. Ensure thorough rinsing of the wound with water, saline, or iodine.
2. Dress the wounds, as appropriate with a dry, sterile dressing.
3. Go to Workplace Health, Room 4159, Support Services Building for assessment and, if necessary, treatment and medical management will be provided.
4. If the occupational health team is not available or the injury happens outside of normal business hours, go to emergency department at LHSC UH, as needed. Report to Workplace Health the next business day*.

*If the injury happens while working geographically distant in a field study location, seek professional medical attention in a timely manner from the nearest hospital or clinic and

contact Western Workplace Health the next business day at 519-661-2111 ext. 85472 to report the bite and seek further advice.

MEDICAL MANAGEMENT & TREATMENT:

- Wound will be assessed by a medical professional, including:
 - the severity, the location and depth of the wound
 - the size of the wound, whether the wound needs closure (sutures)
 - The species of animal that caused the wound, does it have a known health status or is it wild?
 - if the wound is affecting an immunocompromised person
- Treatment will be administered in accordance with the assessment of the wound by a medical professional and may include:
 - Cleaning, closing (if necessary), and bandaging the wound
 - Offering appropriate post-exposure prophylaxis
 - Offering vaccinations if indicated
- Workplace health may reassess any wounds to ensure proper healing at a later appointment.

POST-TREATMENT PROCEDURE:

- The employee's supervisor must submit an [Accident/Illness/Incident Report](#) (AIIR) to uwoaiir@uwo.ca within 24 hours of the incident.
- When returning to work ensure that any open wounds are covered with a bandage.

REFERENCES

Arbour, M., Brosseau, M., Marchand-Senecal, X. Severe leptospirosis after a rat bite in an urban setting. CMAJ 2024 January 22;196:E47-50. Doi: 10.1503/cmaj.231218

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