

5.1 ACVS – Use of N95 respirators recommendations & Animal Allergen Reduction Policy

Cleusa noted that there is high demand for N95 respirators, but short supply. And that Western donated N95's to the hospital at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. She was surprised about the new recommendations that N95's aren't required in all animal holding rooms. There was a historical issue with staff developing allergies, and that's when the animal allergen policy was developed. Her opinion is that surgical masks are not appropriate for animal allergens.

Dr.Siu noted that 5-7 years ago some staff from ACVS had developed allergies. There was evidence that exposure happened at work and at the time, the N95 was the only thing available for use.

Dr.Girotti explained that she conducted a risk assessment based on science in order to come up with the new suggestions on mask use. This went through the Biosafety Committee. There were some historical concerns re: severe allergies & asthma with workers who had worked in ACVS for decades with no respiratory protection. At that time, a blanket SOP was put in place. For the new recommendations, she consulted other U15 institutions re: activities specific to the creation of dust, urine and airborne particles. A 2016 external firm study came in well below the threshold. The animal care committee reviewed & approved an activity specific SOP but were holding out for the new animal care building. Dr.Girotti noted that none of the other facilities on campus or anywhere else in the city where N95's unless it's specifically tied to an activity requiring them. The hope is that a new SOP will be rolled out in November/December with the new animal safety consultant.

Cleusa noted that she didn't feel this was properly communicated with researchers & PI's. She feels that for staff that have to be in rooms with animals, they are still exposed even if the lid is closed. A filter top lid is different. During a 2016 visit from the MOL, she said that the reuse of N95's was appreciated (if not dirty or soiled).

Dr.Girotti agreed that we can correct the issue with filter top lids, but that staff should follow SOP's based on the risk assessment. People that become sensitive should consult with Workplace Health and can wear N95's or ½ face masks. The New SOP will be based on fact & assessment vs. a reactionary response. Animal handling training states that workers should connect with Workplace Health if staff detect things like a runny nose, etc. The new SOP (currently in draft) would replace the 2016 policy. Dr.Girotti will send along some of the documentation that was used in developing the new draft SOP and recommendations re: N95 use.

Matt commented that these discussions and policy approvals would be happening at future Biosafety Committee (Biohazards subcommittee) meetings

Matt offered to invite Cleusa to share her perspectives at Biohazards Subcommittee when discussing new policy..

5.2 Field Visit Reports – MOL

Matt reviewed the FVR's received from the MOL for visits that occurred at Essex Dining Hall (Sep.18th) and in Housing (Oct.1st)

5.3 Proposal for extra (brief) COVID-19 update meeting on November 11th – 1:15pm – 2:00pm
Matt made a motion that he provide an additional COVID-19 update (brief). Approved.

2020: January 15, February 26, April 29, May 20, July 8, September 16, October 21, December 2
2021: January 13, February 24, March 31, May 12, June 30

Meeting attendees in

Cindy Morton-Cesarone , CUPE2692
Peter Chidiac, UWOFA
Felix Lee, UWOFA

Stephen Crowe, IUOE Alternate
Tim Goldhawk, PMA

Barry Fletcher, CUPE Alternate

Mike Gaylard

Jane O'Brien

(Occupational Physician)
(Operations Manager, Robart

