

ANIMAL CARE IN THE FACE OF A PANDEMIC

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Initial Response

- Word from the VCR office to start preparing
- Emergency Response Document
 - Mild, Moderate, Severe staff infection rate approach
 - Mild = No more than 25% of staff are out – can still function as normal
 - Moderate = 25-75% of staff are out – perform essential functions, spot change cages
 - Severe = 75% or more staff are out – perform essential functions, pull in office staff and researchers as needed
 - Definition of the essential functions of animal care
 - Food, water and health
 - Communication, Communication, Communication
 - Set the line of communication and follow the chain of command
 - Put the monkey where it belongs – let each person perform their designated job
 - Contingency plans from PI maintained areas – same approach (mild, moderate, severe)
 - Encourage staff to have their pay checks direct deposit

Updating and Communicating

- Meeting with the VCR as new information was pouring in – Weekly meetings
 - VCR was gathering information from Universities nation wide
 - At that time – OLAC function as normal until employee illness rates escalated along with the general public
 - Everyone preparing contingency plans based on the current information
 - Discussions regarding Key Card Access – this was a PG&E outage issue we didn't need to repeat

- Some concerns early on regarding primate susceptibility. Addressed concerns:
 - PPE measures shielded sputum from getting to primates and from staff touching their faces then touching surfaces
 - Liberal use of disinfectants
 - Sick staff staying home
 - Primate susceptibility is possible, clinical signs seem mild in macaques – strict adherence to standards important !

Ever Changing

- March 16, 2020 legal Shelter in place order: Violation of or failure to comply with this Order is a misdemeanor punishable by fine, imprisonment, or both. To ensure the maximum number of people self isolate while enabling essential services to continue
 - How will they know our staff are essential
 - Traveling to work
 - Going home from work
 - Leaving campus

- OLAC issued Essential Staff stickers for UC Berkeley ID cards as a safeguard
 - UCPD has since issued Essential staff letters from the UC Berkeley Police Chief
 - Campus police will know they are supposed to be on campus when the Key Card System is cut off to non-essentials

- Threw a loop in the current contingency plan
 - Didn't know if it could still work the way we had planned
 - Started sounding like a Major Outbreak when we were functioning as a Minor !!??

Changes Initiated by the VCR

- **Social Distancing**
 - Work from home
 - Exception – Essential Staff
- Its time to **“Ramp Down”** the research
 - VCR Google Sheet listing:
 - PI, 3-5 essential staff that will have access to the animal facilities
 - Their On-Going research
 - Projects they are currently working on
 - Essential functions the lab performs
 - **Exception: COVID 19 research proposals**
- **OLAC = we are still working at the minor infection rate status**
 - Contact all PI maintained areas to complete and submit their contingency plans
 - Stopped all animal orders, transfers, imports/exports
 - Don't stop any On-Going research or any new COVID-19 projects (including the ordering of new animals)
 - Review staffing needs and who could work from home

What Constitutes “Essential Staff”

- = **personnel performing work that cannot be done remotely = Two Classifications**
 - Needed to support the critical operations of the campus
 - Personnel performing emergency functions to restore critical services
- **When everyone else is hunkered down, essential staff still go to town !**
- **Essential by functional area**
 - Police
 - Data center monitoring
 - Warehouse receiving
 - Equipment provisioning for remote workers
 - Building maintenance
 - Custodial services
 - Animal Care
 - Electricians
 - Networking Engineers
 - Occupational Health

Unexpected Outcomes

- Pilfering of PPE coupled with a lack of supplies
 - Wasn't a subtle change – very acute
- PI Staff coming to work sick
 - Runny nose, cough, sneezing, malaise
- Staff fears
 - Wanting to be home
 - Is the institution doing the best for its staff
 - Conflicting and false information - media

New Directions

- We have to keep our staff healthy and feeling secure
 - The Animal Facility is a Safe place to be
 - Disinfection, social distancing due to the nature of the job
 - Anyone that is sick needs to go home
 - Represented staff: 128 hrs of COVID related leave
 - Non-Represented staff: as long as you work one hour, considered a full day
 - Anyone with Child Care concerns needs - let us know so we could address (COVID Time)
- Work Hours
 - More Intense Social Distancing Measures
 - Four 10 hour work days divided into two groups (#1: Sun-Wed #2 Wed-Sat = one overlapping day)
 - Staggered lunch and break times
 - Office Staff work from home, each with specific on site days for services
 - Purchasing
 - Deliveries

New Directions (cont)

- Check PPE Inventory
 - Pulled all surgical masks from non-essential areas (barrier and conventional rodents)
 - Address PPE reusable options for Bats and Primates as well as PAPR's
 - Reuse of disposable PPE – what constitutes contaminated
 - Work with EH&S for acceptable solutions during this period
- Confirm suppliers will continue to deliver
 - Ex. Disinfectants, paper towels, bedding, feed
- Offer Disinfectant filling stations for PI lab spaces
 - Set up carboys with disinfectant and labels in each of the facilities next to elevators
 - Also used by the UCPD

PPE – Exceptions being made (temporary)

- **Rodent areas**
 - Engineering standards – cage changing station, gloves, gown,
 - No opening cages on counter tops or floors
 - If out of gowns, use a clean lab coat
 - If a surgical mask is required for surgery, the lab needs to ask and we will provide and then follow the reuse guidelines
- **Bats**
 - Surgical mask and face shield/eye protection
 - New: face shield with chin guard is used without a mask
 - Reuse masks based on CDC guidelines
- **Primates**
 - PAPR
 - Reuse of disposable face shields if no obvious contamination or breakdown of the elastic head band
- **N95's**
 - We don't use them much
 - Protocol on reuse of N95's based on CDC guidelines for reuse and vetted through EHS
 - Must be fit tested for efficient use



What Have I Learned From This Thus Far?

- Don't make rash/quick decisions
 - Ex. Blocking on-line forms – though they may be filled out, each request can be declined until further notice, notices can be placed on the website to let individuals know that their request may be denied.
- Chain of command is critical during emergency times
 - Each person has their lane (job duties) – stay in your lane
 - Call out suggestions for improvement, but stay in your lane
- "Zoom" is your friend
 - Morning Huddles during a crisis is extremely beneficial – keeps everyone informed from the top down

Answers to Some of Your Questions

- PPE:
 - Reassess need within the vivarium – Engineering standards over PPE
 - Notify PI's of the changes and why, but include your expectations of them
 - Include your EH&S group and Occ Health as needed – Zoom to discuss as a group
- Care for Covered Species when staffing is low
 - Evaluate care in regards to the number of staff at each time point – be fluid
 - Define your essential duties vs what you would do if you had a full staff
 - If staff numbers start going down, train some non-essential staff to perform the more menial duties and the experienced staff provide the care that works closest with the primates.
- Critical Staff Duties
 - These work duties should be established now while you have a complete or nearly complete staff
 - Who would perform what duties if you were at the Severe Infection rate stage
- Research Continuity
 - Institutional. For us, On-going research is fine
 - Must set out early what the expectations are if individuals in their labs get sick and cannot come in – what will the losses be?
 - Forced euthanasia?