

## **PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

Avoiding injury, illness, and/ or infection should be paramount in the veterinary practice. When handling potentially infectious animals, medical waste, or hazardous materials, it is important to know the types of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to use, and how to use them. Specialized PPE for taking radiographs, such as lead lined gowns, gloves, thyroid shields, and goggles are covered in the “Radiology Safety” training module. This training module will focus on other types of PPE.

### **Types of PPE**

- Nitrile gloves (both sterile and nonsterile): Gloves reduce the risk of pathogen transmission by providing a barrier that can be efficiently removed when soiled.
- Facial Protection (goggles or face shields): Facial protection prevents exposure of the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose, and mouth to infectious materials.
- Protective Outerwear (laboratory coats, smocks, aprons, coveralls, nonsterile gowns, footwear, and head covers): The purpose of protective outerwear is to limit the transfer of pathogens between the wearer and the patient, and its importance in infection control is often underappreciated.

### **When to Wear PPE**

When engineering, work practice, and administrative controls are not feasible or do not provide sufficient protection to employees, then the use of PPE should be instituted. The type of PPE used in each circumstance should be chosen dependent on the risk factor.

- Nitrile gloves: Gloves should be worn routinely when contact with feces, body fluids, vomitus, exudates, and nonintact skin is likely. They should be worn when performing dental or obstetric procedures, resuscitations, and necropsies and when handling diagnostic specimens (eg, urine, feces, aspirates, or swabs). Gloves should also be used when cleaning cages, litter boxes, and contaminated equipment and environmental surfaces in animal areas and when handling dirty laundry. Gloves should also be worn when personnel have wounds or other compromised skin integrity of the hands. Gloves are not necessary when examining, handling, vaccinating, or obtaining a blood sample from most healthy animals, provided good hand hygiene is practiced. Gloves should be changed between examinations of individual animals or animal groups, between dirty and clean procedures performed on a single patient, and whenever torn. Gloves should never be washed and then reused for another procedure. Gloves should be removed immediately after use and before beginning other activities. During removal, care should be taken to avoid skin contact with the outer glove surface.
- Facial Protection: Facial protection should be used whenever exposure to splashes or sprays is likely to occur (eg, when lancing abscesses, flushing wounds, or suctioning and when performing dentistry, obstetric procedures, or necropsies). A face shield or goggles worn with a surgical mask provide adequate facial protection during most veterinary procedures that generate potentially infectious sprays and splashes.
- Protective Outerwear: Protective outerwear should be worn when attending animals and when conducting cleaning chores. Disposable protective outerwear should not be reused. Disposable shoe covers or booties add an extra level of protection when heavy quantities of infectious materials are known or expected to be present. When leaving contaminated work areas, promptly remove and dispose of shoe covers and booties. Disposable shoe covers should not be worn on slippery surfaces.

***To better understand when and how to use PPE in the veterinary hospital setting, visit the National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel (Part III, p 1257) – hyperlink is included in the “Additional Training Resources” section of this module.***

**Additional Safety Procedures**

- Clean and disinfect non-disposable PPE regularly
- Wash hands or apply alcohol-based disinfectant regularly
- Never consume food or drink during work procedures or in areas where procedures are taking place
- Avoid touching eyes and mouth without first washing hands
- Routinely clean and disinfect work areas
- Maintain spill response equipment and protocols
- Maintain isolation area or protocols for animals known or suspected of being infectious

**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT SAFETY QUESTIONS**

What kinds of PPE are utilized at this practice and where is each located?

When is PPE required in this practice and what types are needed in each circumstance?

How is PPE properly put on, taken off, stored, and/or disposed of?

What additional measures can be taken to avoid injury, illness, or infection besides using PPE?

Who is responsible for providing and inspecting PPE in the practice?

**ADDITIONAL TRAINING RESOURCES**

Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guide to PPE: <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/ppe/ppeslides6-29-04.pdf>

National Association of State Public Health Veterinarians Compendium of Veterinary Standard Precautions for Zoonotic Disease Prevention in Veterinary Personnel: <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/VeterinaryStandardPrecautions.pdf>