

Animal bite after the animal was inoculated with an infectious agent

A researcher installed an infectious agent into the mouth/lungs of an anesthetized rabbit, inside of a biological safety cabinet (BSC). After the instillation procedure was complete the researcher grasped the sleeping rabbit by its thorax to remove it from the BSC back into its holding cage which was stationed outside of the BSC. Before the removal operation was completed, the rabbit woke up sooner than expected and bit the ring finger of the researcher's left hand.

Caution: Always anesthetize research animals prior to inoculating, applying, or installing any infectious (hot) agents into/onto them. To avoid animal bites it is very important that the appropriate sedation and secure animal holding techniques are routinely used. Once the animal is infected with a hot (pathogenic) research agent, it is doubly dangerous and holding techniques, equivalent to those used on un-anesthetized animals, should be used. Be sure to confer with the animal research facility (ARF) staff to address anesthetizing and animal holding issues prior to starting your animal exposure studies. Any time an animal bite occurs (even bites with non-pathogenic agents) discuss it with the ARF staff and seek ways to improve the safety of the procedure. Be sure to always follow the experimental design and never assume an infected sleeping animal will remain asleep.

Remember: Animal teeth are no different than other sharps. Extreme sharps precautions must always be used when handling animals infected with pathogens. It is CRITICAL to seek the advice of the ARF staff and follow the Institutional Animal Care and Use (IACUC) committee's recommendations prior to beginning animal / pathogen experiments.