

**The University of Tennessee
Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee
Occupational Health Program**

TUBERCULOSIS

People at Risk: Tuberculosis is caused by an organism of the genus *Mycobacterium*. There are many species of *Mycobacterium* that infect many different species of animals. Cattle, birds, and humans are the main reservoirs of the organism. However, non-human primates, swine, sheep, goats, rabbits, cats, dogs, and ferrets may also be infected. Of these species, the non-human primate is the most important source of tuberculosis to people.

People working with non-human primates and known infected cattle herds should be considered at increased risk for infection. Immunocompromised people have higher risk of developing tuberculosis.

Transmission: Transmission occurs by aerosolization of infectious substances such as tissue, secretions, bedding, or feces.

Symptoms: Most commonly tuberculosis causes respiratory signs. Coughing with production of sputum and blood may occur. It can also cause infection in other organs of the body, causing signs specific to the affected organ, and generalized signs of weight loss, fatigue, wasting, fever and chills.

Diagnosis and Prevention:

Tuberculosis is diagnosed in people by an intradermal skin test, chest x-rays, and isolation of the organism in respiratory secretions. Prevention is based on periodic testing of animals, isolation and quarantine of new and suspected animals, the use of personal protective equipment (laboratory gowns, gloves, face and respiratory protection), good personal hygiene, and decontamination of clothing, cages, and waste.