



Veterinary loss prevention program: Ergonomics in the veterinary setting

The Employee Health & Safety exposures and loss prevention efforts are the responsibility of your company. Risk Control services are intended to assist you and your management in evaluating potential exposures to loss and methods to minimize exposure. These services do not necessarily include every possible loss potential, code violation, or exception to good management practice

Ergonomics in the veterinary setting

Trainer's overview

To help your employees get the most out of their training sessions, trainers should:

- Conduct the training sessions in a relatively quiet and uninterrupted environment.
- Keep the sessions for the same time and day of the month (e.g., 12:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday).
- Give out employee handouts along with pencils/pens.
- Review the trainer's guide, employee handout, and any references.
- Keep the sessions to a maximum of 20 minutes.
- Give personal examples of incidents or prevention techniques that worked for them.
- Ensure all employees who attend sign the Safety Training Sign-in Sheet for documentation purposes.
- Conduct a second training session for the employees who could not attend the first session.

Trainer's guide

What do you need to know about ergonomics in the veterinary office setting?

Ergonomics is the scientific study of human work. It considers human interaction in a work capacity with tools, equipment, tasks, processes, and most importantly for our purposes, the working environment itself. Ergonomics in the office workplace is just one branch of the overall scope of ergonomics.

Although we live in a society where production and efficiency are heavily dependent on automation and mechanical assistance, the most essential part of most businesses is the employee. A valuable employee that is ill or injured can negatively affect any company's morale, productivity, and profitability.

Poor body mechanics, prolonged activity, repetitive motions, and fatigue can all be contributing factors of injuries to an employee's neck, head, eyes, back, wrists, hands, shoulders, and more. Application of some of the ergonomic principles outlined below can help prevent or mitigate injuries to employees.

Proper application of ergonomic principles can also help employees work efficiently, productively, and effectively.

With increasing use of computers in so many jobs today, we face a significantly heightened exposure and even a probability of repetitive trauma injuries sustained commonly from prolonged usage and positioning. The primary goal of any ergonomics program is effectively matching workspace and occupational duties to the worker performing the tasks. In this edition, our focus will be primarily in relation to the office environment and more specifically, computer users.

Workplace controls

Work practice controls are meant to reduce the likelihood of exposure through regular refresher training, which reminds and reinforces policies and procedures. Controls include, but are not limited to:



- When sitting at a desk, employees should sit flat against the back of their chair backrest. Correct sitting position includes knees at or below hip levels, with feet placed flat on the floor.
- The computer keyboard and mouse should be kept close to each other. Employees should use their elbows and shoulders to move the mouse, not their wrists.
- The computer monitor should be directly in front of the employee, at about an arm's length away. The top of the monitor should be just slightly below eye level, allowing full view of the screen without head tilting.
- The monitor should be approximately 20 to 40 inches (Starting at an arm's length) from the user.
- The employee's arms and elbows should be close to the body when typing. Wrists should remain straight. A wrist rest should be used during pauses with the fingers still on the keyboard.

Ergonomics in the veterinary setting

Trainer's guide (continued)

Workplace controls (continued)

- Employees should also hit and tap keys with minimum force. Most users hit keys up to four times harder than necessary.
- Headsets are a great alternative to standard phones, especially for employees who spend a considerable amount of time on the phone during daily operations.
- To reduce eye strains, employees can adjust color, font, and contrast to fit their comfort levels. Organizations may consider eliminating screen glare by using an optical glass glare screen.
- Employees should take short eye breaks to relax the eyes. Organizations should instruct employees to briefly focus on distant objects as a method of ocular relaxation.
- Employees should also utilize breaks for the entire body and relax all muscle groups that get strained while working at desk or on computers.
- Workstations should be adjustable. The chair and the interactive computer pieces, such as monitor, keyboard, and mouse, should meet any and all of the ergonomic needs of the employees. Similarly, employees should be made familiar with these adjustable components and also the best practices of setting up their own workstations.
- Encourage employees to maintain good physical fitness, which can improve their comfort levels and overall health.

Regulation

In California, the Ergonomics Standard is Article 106 of the General Industry Safety Orders, specifically §5110 Repetitive Motion Injuries. This regulation can be found at: [California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Section 5110. Repetitive Motion Injuries](#)

This standard applies to a job, process, operation where a repetitive motion injury (RMI) has occurred to more than one employee under the following conditions:

- Work-related causation: The RMIs were the predominant causes (i.e., 50% or more) were a repetitive job, process, or operation.
- Relationship between RMIs at the workplace: The employees incurring the RMIs were performing a job process, or operation of identical work activity such as, but not limited to word processing, grooming animals, wiping surfaces, mopping or sweeping, and any other tasks that involve repetitive motions.

- Medical requirements: The RMI's were musculoskeletal injuries that a licensed physician objectively identified and diagnosed; and
- Time requirements: Employees reported the RMI's to their employer in the last 12 months.

In summary, if your company has two diagnosed RMI's within a 12-month rolling time period, where the predominant causes were a repetitive job or process involving identical work, then you must implement an ergonomics program with training.

Following are the processes that you must implement if you are required to have an ergonomics program:

- Worksite evaluation. All "identical work activities" that have led to two or more RMI's must be evaluated for exposures that have caused the RMI's.
- Controls. Any exposures that caused the RMI's should be corrected or minimized to the extent feasible.
- Training. Provide employees with training that includes an explanation of:
 - ✓ The employer's program
 - ✓ The exposures that have been associated with the RMI's
 - ✓ The symptoms and consequences of injuries that were a result of the repetitive motion
 - ✓ The importance of reporting symptoms and injuries to the employer
 - ✓ Methods that the employer used to minimize RMI's

References

"Easy Ergonomics for Desktop Computer Users" published by Cal/OSHA Consultation Service [Easy Ergonomics \(ca.gov\)](#)

Computer Workstation Interactive Evaluation Checklist from Federal OSHA. [eTools : Computer Workstations - Checklists - Evaluation | Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(osha.gov\)](#)

Ergonomics in the veterinary setting

Trainer's guide (continued)

Questions for discussion

What is ergonomics?

Answer: Ergonomics is the scientific study of human work. For our purposes, we have considered ergonomics in terms of employees who primarily work on computers at a desk.

What are some of the exposures that can be reduced by utilizing a proper configuration of the workstation?

Employees who work at desks with computers face exposure to injuries of the neck, back, legs, eyes, head, wrists, arms, and shoulders. These injuries can be fatigue-related but can also be cumulative over the course of months and even years due to the improper configuration of their workstations.

What are some actions I can take to reduce employees' exposures to ergonomic-related injuries?

The first step in creating an ergonomically safe work environment for office employees is to use adjustable chairs, desks, and computer monitors. With adjustable equipment, employees can customize their personal workstations to fit their comfort and safety levels.

Where can I obtain additional safety information?

Many websites can be helpful, such as:

- <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/ergonomics/>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/multimedia/stretching/sls-20076525>
- <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/25/135575490/sitting-a-11-day-worse-for-you-than-you-might-think>
- <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/officeenvironment/>



Please complete the sign-in sheet.

Contact us today to learn more. safehold.com

Ergonomics in the veterinary setting

Employee handout

What do you need to know about ergonomics in the veterinary office setting?

Ergonomics is the scientific study of human work. It considers human interaction in a work capacity with tools, equipment, tasks, processes, and most importantly for our purposes, the working environment itself. Ergonomics in the office workplace is just one branch of the overall scope of ergonomics.

Poor body mechanics, prolonged activity, repetitive motions, and fatigue can all be contributing factors of injuries to an employee's neck, head, eyes, back, wrists, hands, shoulders, and more. Application of some of the ergonomic principles outlined below can help prevent or mitigate injuries to employees.

Proper application of ergonomic principles can also help employees work efficiently, productively, and effectively.

In this edition, our focus will be primarily in relation to the office environment and more specifically, computer users.

Work practice controls are meant to reduce the likelihood of exposure through regular refresher training, which reminds and reinforces policies and procedures. Controls include, but are not limited to:

- Chairs are very important for comfort. The height of the seat pan should be adjusted so that the feet are on the floor to take stress off the legs. If that is not possible, a footrest should be used.
- It is best not to "sit on your legs" when you sit in a chair. Sitting on your leg reduces blood circulation and can cause varicose veins.
- Keep all the equipment lined up. You should be squarely facing the monitor, with the keyboard directly in between.

- Position the monitor approximately 20 to 40 inches (starting at arm's length) from yourself.
- The height of the monitor should be such that the top of the screen is at or just below eye level. However, if you wear bifocals, you may need to position your screen lower on the desktop so you don't have to tilt your head upward to read the screen.
- Keep the mouse next to the keyboard, within a comfortable reach.
- Keep the phone close, within arm's reach, so you don't have to overreach to answer it, and do not cradle the receiver between your neck and shoulder as this over-stretches the opposite neck muscles.
- Make sure that the space under the desk is cleared so that your legs are not cramped.
- If using a wrist rest, ensure that it is very pliable gel versus hard foam.
- Do not rest your arms on hard sharp edges as this creates pressure points that reduce blood circulation.
- If you wear progressive glasses or bifocals, let your optometrist know so they can order occupational glasses for computer work.
- Let your supervisor know if you feel your workstation needs any adjustment.
- Take frequent "micro breaks" to stretch and relax.

This material is for informational purposes and is not intended to be exhaustive nor should any discussions or opinions be construed as medical advice. Contact your broker for insurance advice, doctor for medical advice, or legal counsel for legal advice regarding your particular situation.

Products and services are offered through Safehold Special Risk, Inc., dba Safehold Special Risk & Insurance Services, Inc. Coverage is provided by unaffiliated insurance companies

© 2022 Safehold Special Risk, Inc. All rights reserved.