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Fact Sheet: Animals - General

You may encounter wildlife, livestock, or domestic pets during your field work. Even docile looking animals (cows or even chipmunks) can act violently and unpredictably. Diseases from bacteria, viruses, parasites, or fungi can be transmitted from animals by scratches, bites, or contact with bodily fluids. Symptoms of these diseases can vary. Diseases can include Salmonella, E. coli, Rabies and Hantavirus.

Personal Protective Equipment

- Long pants and shirts with long sleeves
- Closed toe shoes
- Leather gloves when handling leaf litter
- High visibility clothing
- Bear spray (can deter attacks from aggressive animals)
- Task-appropriate PPE if handling animals as a part of a research protocol

Preparation and Training

- Research animals of concern and be able to identify them in the field.
- Research potential zoonotic diseases that may be present in local species.
- Research behavioral patterns and recommended response to aggressive encounters. You may need to change your behavior or gear to avoid, or respond to, an aggressive encounter.
- It is recommended you take courses in: Basic First Aid

General Safety

- Do not approach or feed any animals, domestic or wild.
- Carry out field work during daylight hours, as animals may be more active at dawn and dusk.
- Take extreme caution if it is breeding season or if there are young animals present in your field area.
- Know the local hunting seasons and wear high visibility clothing if you are out during these seasons.
- Avoid rodents and other scavengers by keeping a clean campsite with food stored in sealed containers.
- Avoid interacting with feces or remains of animals, especially rodents.

- Do not approach animals that appear to be injured or sick; their behavior may be erratic and defensive.
- Contact with animals known to carry zoonotic diseases should be limited and conducted using appropriate precautions.
- If you come across a gate that you must pass through, leave it the way you found it.
 - Leaving a gate open could lead to loss of livestock and significant property damage.
 - Closing gates could separate livestock from food or water reserves.
- After any potential contact with animals, wash hands thoroughly.

First Aid Treatment

- Address immediate injuries with first aid measures. Clean wounds thoroughly.
- Always seek medical attention after a scratch or bite from an animal to prevent infection and to receive a consultation about possible prophylactic treatment for rabies.
- If you become sick after contact with animals or their bodily fluids, seek medical attention and be sure to describe the species that was involved and the nature of the contact.

References and Additional Resources

- National Park Service: [Safe Practices to Avoid Zoonotic Disease from Wildlife: Quick Reference Guide](#)
- Center for Disease Control: [National Center for Emerging and Zoonotic Infectious Diseases](#)
- Adapted from *Animals-General Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.