Wildlife Management Meeting Kit

The risk of conflict between wildlife and people increases. From the expansion of agricultural frontiers to habitat fragmentation by roads and buildings, to the commercialization of wildlife as food, trophies, ornaments, medicine, and pets, threats abound.

OUTDOOR HAZARDS/RISKS

There are many risks that come with working outside and one of these risks is the outdoor wildlife. Each year between 7,000 and 8,000 people are bitten by snakes, 4.5 million people are bitten by dogs, and 30,000 cases of Lyme disease are reported to the CDC. Additionally, approximately 40,000 people receive anti-rabies treatment after exposure to potentially rabid animals.

SPECIFIC OUTDOOR HAZARDS WHEN WORKING IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO WILDLIFE CREATURES

- Infectious disease transmission from mosquito or small animal bites
- Swelling, mild or severe allergic reactions from stinging insects
- Serious injury or death from contact with black bears

ANIMAL WILDLIFE HANDLING MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

1. **Approach All Animals With Caution.** Take care to avoid blind spots and approach animals slowly so that they are always aware of your presence. Talk softly as you approach an animal so it hears you coming. Sudden movements are never a good idea, regardless of the species or breed involved.
2. **Stay Alert at All Times.** Bites, kicks, and scratches are often delivered when a handler is distracted. When you are

working with animals they need to have your complete attention at all times. A moment of carelessness is all it takes to sustain a potentially serious injury. Don’t let yourself be distracted by a cell phone or idle chatter with other handlers.

3. **Study the Behavior of the Species.** Handlers must pay close attention to the behavioral signals that an animal displays. It is very important to recognize negative body language—especially the signs of agitation. Horses pin their ears, strike with their teeth, and kick when upset. Dogs growl, crouch, and bare their teeth when they feel threatened. Be sure to learn the warning signs when you start to work with a new species.
4. **Take Precautions Against Zoonotic Diseases.** Zoonotic diseases are those that can be transmitted directly from animals to humans. Examples of zoonotic diseases include ringworm, salmonella, herpes B, rabies, hepatitis, and tuberculosis. You should be familiar with the basic signs of an infected animal and be aware of how transmission can occur so you can take the proper precautions to avoid infection.
5. **Minimize Allergic Reactions.** Allergens such as animal dander can potentially cause sneezing, wheezing, eye irritation, or hives. Some individuals have severe breathing emergencies which require the use of an inhaler or even hospitalization. Allergy shots may be necessary to minimize your reaction so that you can safely work with animals in a hands-on capacity.
6. **Inspect Handling Facilities for Safety.** Sharp edges, slippery floors, improper lighting, and other structural hazards are responsible for many accidents and injuries. It is important to maintain a safe work environment and to keep all animal handling equipment in good working order.
7. **Wear Personal Protective Equipment.** Items of personal protective equipment can include a variety of options such as safety glasses, latex gloves, masks, steel toed footwear, helmets, coveralls, and lead aprons. If there is a product available and it is appropriate for the task at hand,

consider taking advantage of it.

8. **Restrain Animals Properly.** Securing animals safely can help you to avoid sprains, strains, slip and fall accidents, and other physical injuries. Large animals, such as cattle and horses, should be placed in stocks or stalls. Halters, hobbles or other restraints can also be utilized. Dogs can be muzzled and cats can be wrapped gently in towels. In extreme cases, a tranquilizer should be administered by a veterinarian.
9. **Dispose of Medical Waste in Appropriate Containers.** Always handle any hazardous medical equipment (such as needles or chemicals) with extreme caution. Never throw needles away in the trash.
10. **Have an Exit Strategy.** An exit strategy is especially important when working with large animals in pens, stalls, or chutes. Don't allow yourself to get cornered. Maintain a clear path of escape at all times. You could be seriously injured if you are pinned in a corner by one of the larger livestock species.

GENERAL WILDLIFE SAFETY WORK RECOMMENDATIONS

- Make your presence known by using your voice – the best encounter is the one you avoid.
- Travel in groups whenever possible.
- Watch for wildlife signs (scat, scratches on trees, overturned logs, fresh kills).
- Avoid travelling at dawn and dusk when predators are most active.
- Know the habitat and seasonal use by wildlife
- Always carry a cellular phone, or other two-way communication device.
- Be aware of your surroundings, and note any wild or suspicious acting animals in your work area.
- Avoid reaching or stepping into or over hidden areas that may contain wildlife.
- Be aware of signs that indicate above or below ground animal

nests, to prevent contamination.

- Avoid direct contact with bird, bat or other animal droppings.
- Avoid direct contact with animal blood. If contact cannot be prevented, wear rubber gloves.
- Carry safety equipment such as bear spray and know how transport and use it safely. Bear spray is effective against all large mammals and should be your first choices as a deterrent.
- If you encounter dangerous wildlife, stay calm, never run and know how best to react.
- Have a workplace wildlife safety plan and checklist that should be reviewed before heading into the field
- Ensure all workers that may potentially encounter wildlife are properly trained in wildlife awareness and safety.

FINAL WORD

Preparing for wildlife interaction will keep one safe and secure when one recognizes wildlife interaction. Understanding your options before you have to react to a wildlife encounter will enable you to avoid any wildlife conflict.