 ROSS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF VETERINARY MEDICINE	<h2>Fieldwork Safety Planning Guidelines</h2>	Issue Date:	1 August 2017
		Revised Date:	1 June 2022
		Revised by:	EH&S Manager
		Originator:	Health and Safety Committee

I. Purpose

“Fieldwork” is defined as Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM) affiliated work/academic activities conducted primarily for the purpose of research, volunteer, or other activities occurring off campus or outdoors on campus grounds, including working with live animals and includes both local and international travel. These activities can expose participants to significant risks to health and safety, e.g., isolated locations, dangerous terrain, harmful wildlife, security issues, or high-risk activities.

The purpose of these guidelines are to ensure that:


- Academic supervisors conducting or overseeing fieldwork, identify potential hazards that may be encountered, identify potential risks to the surrounding community, and develop and implement appropriate safety plans.
- Participants, including volunteers, have an informed understanding of, and agree to assume, the risks of the fieldwork.
- Participants have an informed understanding of, and agree to perform, their responsibilities as participants in the fieldwork.


Colleagues responsible for such fieldwork should document their plan using the *Fieldwork Safety Planning Form*. This form should be filed with the principal investigator/academic supervisor with overall responsibility for the fieldwork program and the center director. This form only needs to be completed once for recurring projects unless new team members are involved.

Fieldwork activities must receive all necessary approvals from university bodies (IACUC, IRB, PGRC, safety committees, etc.) before fieldwork may commence. **For activities that are strenuous, hazardous, or in remote locations (including any research out of the country), all participants should check with Health Services to ensure immunizations or other preventative measures (such as for malaria) are up to date. Any potential health concerns based on the potential risks that will be encountered during the fieldwork should also be identified. Examples can include diarrhea, injuries, tick borne fevers. Any required medical clearances must kept on file by all participants and the Research Office.**

II. Scope

These guidelines cover activities approved / or funded by RUSVM, that is conducted outdoors or away from campus. Examples include, but are not limited to, fieldwork in jungles, forests, and beaches, as well as door-to-door interviews and sampling in cities and towns. These guidelines are not intended for fieldwork conducted in other facilities that have established safety procedures, e.g., other universities, hospitals, national laboratories, zoological parks, etc. Certain fieldwork activities, because of their inherent higher risk, require preparation beyond

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the scope of these guidelines. This includes any research involving diving (scuba or free), which must be conducted under the oversight of a certified dive officer if diving with another institution. All participants in such activities must be appropriately certified.


III. Responsibilities


All participants in fieldwork bear the responsibility for their own safety. The primary responsibility, however, lies with the academic supervisor who is responsible for conducting the risk assessment and providing proper training to individual team members. The following outlines specific responsibilities for safety in fieldwork.

1. Academic Supervisor

The academic supervisor is the principal investigator, instructor, manager or other person with overall responsibility for the fieldwork program. He or she has the primary responsibility to develop and document safety plans, obtain all necessary approvals, provide appropriate training, ensure participant compliance, and maintain all documentation relating to the fieldwork program. Therefore, the academic supervisor has the following responsibilities:

- Identifying and assessing the health and safety risks associated with the fieldwork project, seeking assistance from Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) and Health Services as needed.
- Developing appropriate procedures to manage the risks.
- Establishing the field team composition, including responsible team leadership.
- Ensuring that team members have appropriate equipment and training, including training and/or licensure in equipment and vehicle operation.
- Ensuring that team members understand the risks, risk control procedures, and lines of authority.
- Ensuring that team members have access to and utilize required personal protective equipment and have the appropriate safety training based on the assessed hazards and risks.
- Obtaining informed written consent from team members (or parents/guardians for participants under age 18).
- Ensuring all involved personnel have consulted with Health Services for any medical concerns (required for activities that are strenuous, hazardous, or in remote locations including any fieldwork out of the country).
- Documenting the above including completion of the *Fieldwork Safety Planning Form*.
- Maintaining the *Field Research Safety Planning Form* and copies of any required medical clearances for all team members.

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- Ensuring that medical clearance forms are available for emergency use in the field.
- Reporting and incidents to the Center Director and EH&S.

2. Center Director and Department Chair

The center director or the department chair have the following responsibilities:

- Supporting the academic supervisor's efforts to ensure compliance with these guidelines.
- Designating a departmental contact or center person for all fieldwork teams. This person would collect and maintain the *Fieldwork Safety Planning Forms*.
- Consulting with EH&S and Health Services as needed for guidance with documentation related to fieldwork activities.
- Keeping informed of all adverse events related to fieldwork activities.
- Directing the academic supervisor to maintain files of *Fieldwork Safety Planning Forms* and health forms for three years after completion of the fieldwork project.

3. Team Leader


The team leader may be the academic supervisor or another person designated by the academic supervisor. The team leader has the following responsibilities:


- Directing the team's fieldwork activities.
- Planning activities so that team members are appropriately rested.
- Ensuring implementation of training and risk control procedures established by the academic supervisor.
- Dealing with any safety concerns that arise in the field.
- Maintaining regular contact with the academic supervisor and/or center/departmental contact, and informing them of any accidents, illnesses, or emergencies.

4. Team Members

Each member of the fieldwork team have the following responsibilities:

- Fulfilling their field responsibilities under the direction of the team leader.
- Following the safety procedures established by the academic supervisor.
- Attending required training to safely conduct fieldwork activities.
- Working safely and in a manner intended to avoid harm to themselves or others.
- Reporting any identified hazards to the team leader.
- Providing evidence of a satisfactory state of health and immunization(s).
- Informing the academic supervisor of any health concerns.
- Providing written consent of the above to the academic supervisor.
- When in doubt, always ask for further instruction before beginning a task.

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- Reporting any accidents, illness, or emergencies to the team leader.

NOTE: Any member of the fieldwork team has both a right and duty to refuse to participate in any activity that he or she feels may endanger health or safety.

5. Solitary Fieldwork


Whenever possible, fieldwork activities should be performed in teams of at least two people. The “buddy” system is the safest way to work. Therefore, solitary fieldwork is discouraged, particularly when it involves remote or hazardous locations or high-risk activities. However, when solitary work is unavoidable, stringent care must be taken to ensure training, competence, regular reporting and communication, appropriate emergency procedures, and other precautions are followed.


IV. General Considerations

A useful resource that may help in assessing risk is the University of California, Berkeley’s Safety Guidelines for Field Researchers:

<http://www.ehs.berkeley.edu/pubs/fieldresearchsfty.pdf>. For most fieldwork activities, the following considerations should be taken into account in planning the fieldwork:

- Participants must be in a satisfactory state of fitness and health, be evaluated by Health Services as necessary, and must have all appropriate immunizations. Note that many immunizations or prophylactic treatments must be given well in advance of travel. Additional information on vaccines for travel can be found on the CDC Travel Smart webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/vaccines-travel/index.html>
- Appropriate health insurance and its limitations (for information on insurance issues when the fieldwork is conducted internationally please contact Human Resources.
- First-aid supplies and manual, with team members trained in their use (appropriate training depends on the circumstances, e.g., Standard First Aid, CPR, use of automated external defibrillators, etc.).
- Means of obtaining emergency medical care.
- Appropriate personal clothing, field equipment, and personal protective equipment (e.g., safety glasses, gloves, steel-toed boots, helmets, etc.).
- Food and accommodations.
- Transportation, both planned and in case of emergency.
- Information about the requirements of foreign governments and other jurisdictions concerning travel to, and research at, the site (including health and safety regulations), as well as local/regional embassy information.
- Determination of responsible leadership for all teams.
- Definitions of the tasks and responsibilities of each team member.

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- Appropriate training of team members in use of equipment, safety, and emergency procedures.
- Procedures for contacting the university security and emergency help if needed (e.g., mobile telephone, radios, and a list of phone numbers).
- Ensuring that participants carry their own health insurance information, emergency contact information, and personal medications.
- Plan for emergencies including theft, illness, vehicle emergency, hurricanes, etc.
- Identify and plan for local risks (e.g., pests, extreme heat, disease).
- Ensure that only qualified individuals operate any vehicle; and vehicles must be inspected for appropriate safety equipment.

V. Additional Safety Considerations

1. Medical Care and First Aid

Academic supervisors are required to implement the following guidelines when conducting off campus activities that involve employees and students, including field trips, excursions, and field station operation:

- A first aid kit must be available at all times during the activity or exercise (see Section 2 below).
- At least one person who is trained in first aid must be present when an infirmary, clinic, hospital, or Emergency Medical Service response is more than five minutes from field activities.
- If you are working from a field station, you should find out what the arrangements are for emergency care, i.e., local medical facilities, clinics, or other.


2. First Aid Kits


First aid kits must be provided for all off-campus activities. First aid kits and refills are commercially available, however you can contact EH&S or Health Services for advice on the contents of a first aid kit depending on the type of fieldwork being conducted and potential animals and insects that may be present.

3. Physical and Environmental Hazards

Many general physical and environmental hazards exist in nearly every location worldwide. All personnel working in the field, regardless of location, should familiarize themselves with and receive training from supervisors regarding the unique conditions and hazards that may be present in the areas where fieldwork is occurring.

4. Animals and Pests

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Dangerous animals and other pests are present worldwide. General safety rules can help protect you from these hazards. Follow these general guidelines:

- Keep garbage in rodent-proof containers and stored away from your campsite or work area. Food crumbs and debris may attract insects and animals.
- Thoroughly shake all clothing, shoes, and bedding before use.
- Do not camp or sleep near obvious animal nests or burrows.
- Carefully look for pests before placing your hands, feet, or body in areas where pests live or hide (e.g., woodpiles or crevices).
- Avoid contact with sick or dead animals. However, when research protocol or animal welfare dictates the handling of sick or dead animals, appropriate safety measures need to be implemented, e.g., use of gloves and snake sticks.
- Wear clothes made of tightly woven materials and tuck pants into boots.
- Wear insect repellent.
- Minimize the amount of time you use lights after dark in your camp or work site because they may attract pests and animals. Use of red lights are recommended.
- Use netting to keep pests away from food and people.
- Carry a first aid manual and kit with you on any excursion so you can treat bites or stings (if the pest is poisonous or if the bite does not appear to heal properly, seek medical attention immediately).
- Be aware of the appearance and habitat of likely pests that may be encountered.


5. Diseases


Viruses, bacteria, fungi, and parasites cause diseases in nearly every location worldwide. Some diseases, carried and transmitted by an animal, are known as zoonotic diseases.

Always consult with Health Services before traveling out of the country to learn about specific health risks for the region in which you will be conducting your fieldwork and appropriate prophylactic measures.

6. Rodent Handling

Steps can be taken to reduce the risk of rodent-borne diseases. Most important - make the area unattractive to rodents. Cover or repair holes into a building to prevent unwanted rodents. If camping, keep the area clean of trash and store food carefully to prevent attracting rodents. Do not camp near rodent burrows. Please refer to the section on animals and pests for further tips on how to prevent rodent infestations. If rodent feces or dead rodents are discovered, some precautions will help reduce the risk of exposure to rodent-borne diseases when cleaning the area:

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- *Dead rodents*: using gloves, cover the dead rodent with a solution of 1.5 cups of bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- *Rodent feces*: do not sweep or vacuum rodent droppings, spray the droppings first with a bleach solution, and then wipe up the droppings; if possible, wet mop the area with the bleach solution.

7. Other Diseases

Many other diseases may pose a problem when traveling out of the country. Always consult with Health Services to learn the specific threats of your location of study. There are other diseases to be aware of when traveling internationally. While risk of infection is generally low, it is important to be aware of them, and take the appropriate precautions to guard against diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, newly emerging respiratory infections, rabies, and viral hemorrhagic fevers.

8. Fieldwork Safety Planning Form

Please see the *Fieldwork Safety Planning Form* for additional information on risk assessment and additional safety concerns and precautions. This form should be completed by the academic supervisor who is responsible for overseeing the fieldwork. Team participants must read and understand information on this form and the Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine (RUSVM) Fieldwork Safety Planning Guidelines. The academic supervisor and center director are also required to sign off on the completed form.

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