2023 INVESTIGATION MANUAL

HOW TO EXPOSE ANIMAL ABUSE

Contents

The Importance of Investigation

This manual is an attempt to lay out best practices for investigation in an accessible way, given that a growing number of ordinary people around the world are becoming grassroots investigators.

Investigation as a tactic is not new, but it is constantly evolving. The animal rights movement has a long history of undercover investigations of factory farms, slaughterhouses, fur farms, animal testing labs, puppy mills, and other places where animals are abused.

With the first open rescue conducted by Animal Liberation Victoria in Australia in 1993, a new kind of investigation was set in motion: open investigations and rescues. This is a form of nonviolent direct action where activists enter animal farms and other facilities, document the conditions, and rescue animals without hiding their identities from the public. Government repression effectively chilled the open rescue movement in the United States for a time, until Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) was founded in 2013, and within a few years, open rescues were happening at farms throughout the country and around the world.

It's no surprise that the government has sought to repress these investigators and animal rescuers. For decades, animal exploiting industries have used their money and political connections to pass laws that criminalize investigation. "Ag gag" laws are on the rise in the United States and other countries, despite often being struck down in court.

Open rescue makes it easy for the government to come after activists because their identities are publicized. Given the high legal risk involved, many investigators choose to remain anonymous, but open investigation and rescue has advantages that many decide are worth the risk.

When we show our faces openly, we tell the world that we are proud of the work we are doing and draw a sharp contrast between our own transparency and the secrecy of animal abusing industries. Our willingness to accept prosecution shows the urgency and seriousness of our cause. In many past social justice movements, from the Civil Rights Movement to Occupy, acts of personal sacrifice have drawn widespread attention and sympathy. Sacrifice can also be transformational for activists themselves. By asking ourselves what we are truly willing to give for the animals, we strengthen and solidify our commitment to the mission of animal liberation. For all these reasons, movement theorists identify sacrifice as a key element of successful social justice movements.

Before you take part in an investigation, it is important to think carefully about how much you are willing to sacrifice and what strategies will be most effective to meet your goals. For example, open rescue can lead to felony charges of burglary, breaking or entering, theft, and more.

Investigators have to balance transparency with security, inclusion with caution, and emotion with strategy. If you're going to take the risk and become an investigator, make sure you are prepared.

Disclaimer

This document was written and reviewed by experienced investigators with hundreds of cumulative hours in the field but is still subject to errors. Take any information or guidance from this manual at your own risk and after your own personal research and consideration. The information gathered here is based on experiences almost exclusively in the United States, and experiences in different areas may be vastly different.

Safety and Security Protocols

Modern animal agriculture investigation is a complex and constantly evolving field of practice with hundreds of relevant skills, theories, and best practices to learn and master. This section consists of some basic yet crucial safety and security concepts that everyone involved in investigation needs to understand and internalize.

Your comprehension of these practices and your ability to implement them are paramount to the success of the mission and the safety of your team. Read this section carefully and repeatedly.

These concepts are just as relevant to experienced team leaders as they are to a first-time participant. This text should be saved for future reference and reflection when a refresher is needed.

Investigator Conduct

Chain of Command

In many investigatory teams, a chain of command or centralized leadership structure will be adopted to ensure that decisions can be made and followed in a quick and efficient manner under stress. A chain of command is often as simple as assigning a team lead who is responsible for bottom-lining the planning and execution of the mission and will make decisions when there is no time for discussion. A chain of

command can also be more complicated, including specific leadership roles with decision making authority on different subjects and in different circumstances.

It is always recommended that the team makes decisions together and uses a consensus process whenever there is sufficient time, in order to make sure everyone feels bought in and all information and perspectives are heard. Consider agreeing on specific circumstances in which the team lead can make unilateral decisions. Make sure team members know to still add key information if they think something is being overlooked. It is important that all team members understand and buy into the chain of command, so that when plans need to change on the fly, everyone is in agreement on listening to the team lead. No one can be forced to follow the decision of the team lead or the general consensus, but if someone fails to follow the chain of command in a high-risk circumstance, that is a red flag. You may decide not to include that person in high-risk work in the future.

Often, seconds can make the difference between mission success and failure. When being chased by angry individuals, there is no time to argue about which direction to go.

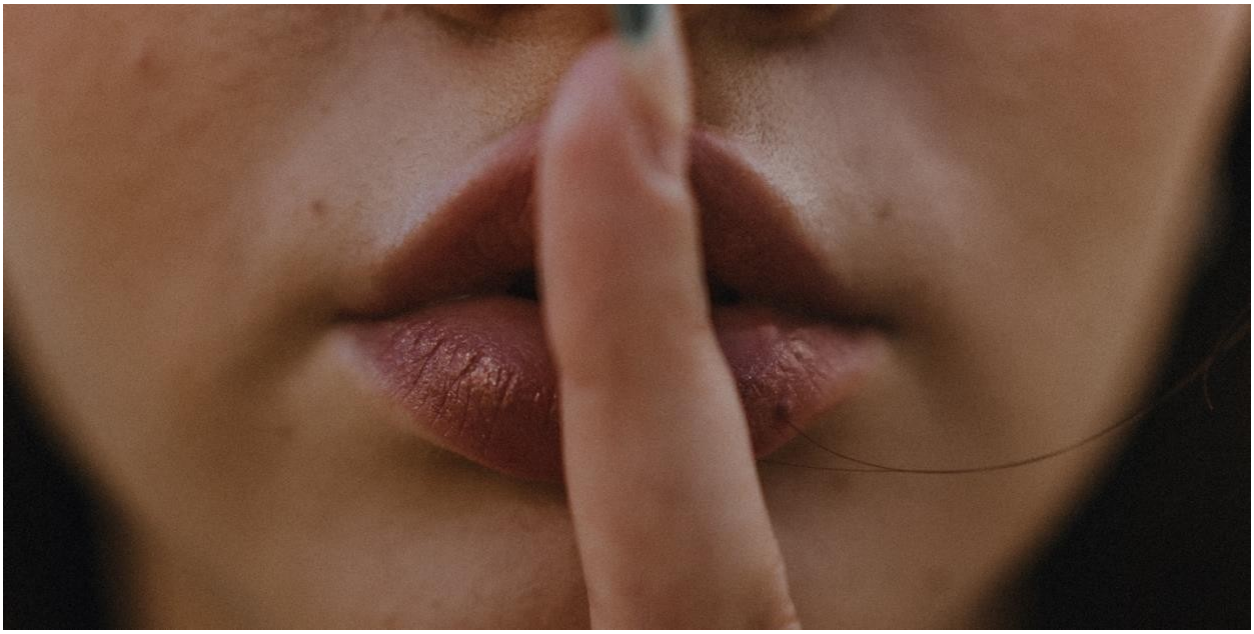
A good leadership structure will ensure that decisions are made through consensus, when possible, but that the final word of the lead is followed when in the field. Every investigation should include a debrief in which decisions can be analyzed and team members can give feedback on what could have been done differently.

Prioritizing Team Safety and the Mission

On the ground during an investigation, you will experience many intense emotions. From fear of being caught to sadness or desperation at the conditions animals are trapped in. These feelings are completely normal and can feel overwhelming. We cannot, however, allow these feelings to overwhelm us in the moment, and we need to focus on the task at hand. Many investigators have developed techniques that help them personally deal with the experiences of investigation, but this will vary person to person.

The most important thing to remember is that your team is relying on you to remain calm and focused. If you don't think you are emotionally fit to partake in an investigation right now, the best thing to do is wait and practice skills for dealing with high intensity situations. Investigators are also expected to remain nonviolent if they are confronted by workers or police during an investigation. Refer to the deescalation, evasion, and escape section for more details.

Security Culture



Years after the assassination of Malcolm X, it was revealed that his chief bodyguard was an FBI informant. "Agent provocateurs" have been exposed while attempting to incite political violence dozens of times, as was the case at the 2004 RNC protests in New York. And we now know that the FBI engaged in a blackmail campaign against Martin Luther King Jr. using evidence of his extra-marital affairs to demand that he kill himself.

It is impossible to know how many social and political movements over the years have been impacted by clandestine sabotage, but what we do know is that the repressive tools of the state have only evolved in our modern world. Governments and tech companies around the world track our every move, purchase, web search, and message. Moreover, social media culture encourages us to brag and boast about our actions and do the work of surveillance for them.

Cultural practices implemented by a community to protect from this kind of repression are called "Security Culture." While the threats we face are ever-evolving, the same basic cultural norms that have been used for generations can do a lot to keep us safe from infiltration and surveillance.

Importance of Security Culture

Even if investigators plan on releasing their identities publicly along with the investigation, it is best to release that information on your own terms. You can always decide to reveal information later, but once something is out there you can't take it back.

Consider some of the risks of information leaking unintentionally:

1. Law enforcement could take action to stop investigations or direct actions before they are able to take place.

2. Other activists could become upset that they are not included if they know an investigation is happening without them.

3. Information could slip out about investigators or logistical supporters who didn't plan on releasing their identities.

4. An excess of information could make it very easy for law enforcement to prosecute activists.

Need to Know

Need to know is a simple protocol; the name says it all. Sensitive information should only be shared with those who absolutely need to know it for logistical reasons. This means, for example, that if you are going to a farm tonight, you may need to tell the address to the person who will be driving, but you should not share the location with a fellow activist who can't come this time. You might not even need to tell the driver where you are going, and this could help protect them in court later. This becomes more complicated in situations where someone doesn't strictly need to know something, but it would be beneficial for them to know. Depending on the severity of the potential worst-case scenario, it is advised to err on the side of caution and restrict information when you are unsure.

Bragging

One common way security is violated is through bragging. Investigatory work is interesting and exciting, and as a movement, we elevate those who are willing and able to take risks to their safety and freedom by engaging in risky actions. It is understandable that many people want to tell their friends about the projects they have worked on, but this can be a problem for security.

When talking about actions you have taken, consider the impact you could have on your whole team. Divulging information puts everyone at risk. You can't know who is listening, either physically or electronically, and any piece of information you share unnecessarily could be the missing piece to a case or investigation against your team. Someone with information about your actions could be persuaded or coerced by the authorities to inform on you, and refusing to share information they have could lead to legal consequences for them.

There is real value in telling stories about investigations and rescues, personalizing the actions, and inspiring more people to take similar actions. This is why we embrace “open” rescue and investigation. But it is paramount to the safety and trust of your team that you only share information that has been publicly released, and in a way that has been agreed upon by everyone.

A tendency towards bragging, or an unwillingness to respect the privacy of the team, is a huge red flag, and repeated violations should mean removal from any high-risk teams indefinitely, or until understanding and behavior change is demonstrated. If you notice someone violating security culture, take them aside privately and remind them of your community agreements. If the violation is serious or repeated, tell your team leadership immediately.

Prying

Another difficulty often arises when dealing with close friends or family who feel entitled to information about what we are doing and where we are going. Especially in romantic partnerships, it can cause serious conflict if you are unable or unwilling to divulge the specifics of what you are up to on long nights out. It is a good idea to talk to your close friends, partners, or family well in advance and let them know that you have become interested in some new types of activism. Explain that you may one day have to participate in a project that you cannot share with them, and that they should trust you and your intentions. If you are having a difficult time explaining or negotiating this, reach out to other experienced activists for their advice. At the end of the day, it may come down to a decision of priorities on your part, but it is absolutely unacceptable to violate the trust of your team by sharing confidential information without their express consent, and this would lead to a permanent removal from high-risk work.

It is recommended to avoid being dishonest, and to instead be vague about specifics or try to change the subject when questioned. Dishonesty often leads to complications down the line when you are required to answer more specific questions on the spot. It is preferable to end the questioning as early as possible. Here are some examples of ways you might answer when asked where you are going:

- *“Just going out with some friends.”*
  Hopefully you are friends with some of the members of your team, or at least you might consider the nonhuman animals your friends.

- *“Doing a project for work.”*
  Investigation is certainly work.

- *“Going for a drive.”*

Depending on your relationship to the person questioning you, it might also be acceptable to just let them know that you’re doing something private and are uncomfortable sharing with them. It is not advised however to obviously imply the reality of what you are doing. The ultimate goal is for the person asking to not even consider that you might be participating in an investigation.

This leads to the second piece of need to know: the practice of respecting each other's privacy and not prying when a fellow activist becomes vague or evasive in response to your questions. It can be very difficult for someone practicing security culture to navigate a situation where they are being repeatedly questioned and interrogated. It is the job of good cultural norms to make your community a safe and easy place to take part in risky action. We protect everyone involved by not asking questions about secure topics and not prying when someone is vague.

For many, it is hard to accept the idea that we might not always be included in exciting activities or confidential information, and this can lead people to feel undervalued or mistrusted. It is understandable to want to be included, especially seeing as everyone has unique perspectives and skills that could benefit high-risk projects. This being said, it is important that we respect the safety and security of those putting themselves at risk, and never make their lives more difficult by pushing, prying, or complaining to get more information.

Investigatory work carries incredible risks, and yet, in the modern animal rights movement, it is easy to become comfortable and forget the potential consequences to which investigators are subjecting themselves. If you feel that information is being kept from you, trust and respect that it is being done to protect you and your fellow activists.

Gossip / Infighting

The second aspect of a good security culture is equally important, and infinitely more difficult. One of the main goals of infiltrators and informants is to create conflict, backstabbing, and mistrust between activists. A culture of gossip and infighting is inhospitable and unwelcoming, creates tension among activists, and makes it easy for the state to turn us against each other and create informants. A classic law enforcement tactic is to collect gossip or hurtful remarks made about someone, and then show that person the “reality” of what their fellow activists think about them. This feeling of being disliked or unwanted makes it much more likely for otherwise committed community members to inform on each other or take deals. Why would someone accept jail time to protect a “friend” who says horrible things behind their back?

Protecting against this is difficult. As a purpose-driven activist community, we need to

remember that protecting each other comes before the enjoyment or social benefits of gossip. When we have complaints about someone's behavior, we should bring our concerns directly to the person exhibiting the behavior in an understanding way. When we hear gossip or unkind talk about someone behind their back, we should remind our community members of the risks and ask if they would be comfortable with the person in question hearing the conversation. Remember that you can never know who is listening.

The extreme stress and trauma of investigation often have serious effects on the mental health of investigators, so remember to be patient and empathetic with fellow activists.

Digital Security

The subject of digital privacy and security is complex and constantly evolving, and often seems intimidating to people of average technological competence. As an investigator, however, it is imperative that you take basic steps to protect the digital information of you and your team. From your communications to geo-location data, your electronic devices likely contain all the information needed to blackmail you or create a robust legal case against you.

Securing devices

The first step you should take to protect your information is to lock your phone and computer with a strong password. This can easily be enabled in settings. Do not use biometric locks like fingerprint or facial recognition, as the authorities can sometimes

force you to unlock with these methods.

After adding a password, encrypt your devices. Without encryption, your data can be accessed very easily by anyone with physical access to your devices. Encryption is enabled by default on new android and iOS smartphones or can be easily enabled in the device settings. Enabling Filevault encryption is simple on an Apple computer. On a windows or linux device, your best option for encryption is a third party application called “Veracrypt." Veracrypt might seem complicated at first, but just download it and follow the step-by-step instructions to set it up. Research whether your device encryption works while your device is turned on or if it only works when your device is “at rest,” and consider making a plan to turn devices off if they are seized.

Communication

Electronic communication is crucial to planning and executing investigations effectively. However, most communications can be intercepted by law enforcement and tech companies and used to stop or prosecute you and your team.

The simplest way to protect your communication is to use an encrypted app like “Signal," which is free to download. Signal protects your data using an encryption key so that it cannot be intercepted in transit. Signal also enables disappearing messages, so that even if your device password is cracked, you aren’t storing old messages.

Signal

Download for Android | Download for iPhone or iPad | Download for Mac

The standard protocol is to use Signal for all investigation-related conversations, enable quickly disappearing messages (try to time these so that if a phone is captured by law enforcement no relevant messages will still exist), name the chat something random, and do not include anyone but those who are absolutely required in the chat. It is a good practice to routinely delete any chats that are no longer relevant.

Even if you are using secure communication apps, assume that anything you say on an electronic device will be recorded by law enforcement. Always keep conversations offline when possible.

Search

Because investigations often rely so heavily on internet research, it is important to protect our browsing and reduce the chances that it is being tracked or surveilled. For low-risk, day-to-day search activity, using a more secure browser like Firefox along with the search engine DuckDuckGo will make sure that your searches will not be tracked by Google, and you can add a VPN (Virtual Private Network) to make sure your internet service provider is not watching either.

This is still not perfectly secure, and for high-risk research, it is recommended to use the TOR browser, which was designed for use by the US military and is generally considered the highest standard of security.

Burner Phones

Even with all the best security practices implemented, phone locations can be triangulated by the cell service provider and can usually be cracked by law enforcement, revealing all the data inside.

If you are set on needing a phone during your investigation, the best thing you can do is to use a burner phone. A burner phone is a normal phone that you have acquired in a way that makes it difficult to link to you. In order to understand how to keep a phone from being linked to you, you need to understand how linking happens.

1. **Payment / Accounts**
    a. If you buy a phone or phone plan with your own credit card or show your ID, it can be linked to you.

    b. If you set the phone up with your own Google, social media, banking, etc. accounts it can be linked to you.

    c. If you set the phone up with your own biometric info (face ID, fingerprint) for security, it can be linked to you.

2. **Phone Location**

a. If your burner phone spends a lot of time next to your personal phone, it can be linked to you.

b. If your burner phone spends time at your house, school, work, or other location linked to you, it can be linked to you.

c. If your own phone routinely shuts off directly before the burner is turned on in the same area, it can be linked to you.

d. If your burner phone routinely turns on near your house, travels to a farm, and then shuts back off near your house, it can be linked to you.

3. **Physical Compromise**
    a. If you are arrested with your burner phone in your pocket, it can be linked to you.

    b. If your house or car is raided and your burner phone is found, it can be linked to you.

Generally, the best practices to reduce the chances of a burner phone being linked to you are to:

1. Purchase the burner phone (and compatible prepaid plan) in cash at a physical store that is far away from your house and your personal trackable devices, which means leaving your phone and other internet connected devices at home.

2. Set up the phone with made-up personal information and use the phone to create a new email address if it requires one.

3. Turn on encryption and use a strong, alphanumeric password.

4. Use a “faraday” lead-lined, signal-blocking bag to store the phone when not in use.

5. Store the burner turned off, ideally away from your house and personal phone.

6. Only turn on the burner phone close to your target location. Do not reveal your travel path.

7. Avoid having your burner phone seized by law enforcement.

8. Switch out burner phones as often as possible. Avoid reusing them for too long.

The best practice is to use each phone / set of phones for only 1 location or area, and only use them for a couple months at the longest.

9. Securely dispose of your burner phone by wiping the data, turning it off, physically wiping down the phone, and throwing it away far from your house.

We know it is horrible to waste electronics, but you may decide it's worth it to keep you out of prison and able to continue doing activism.

Biosecurity

Large animal agriculture facilities are breeding grounds for some of the most dangerous pathogens known to humans. Zoonotic diseases, those that spread between humans and other animals, have made up some of the deadliest pandemics in history. Diseases spread and mutate extremely quickly in factory farms due to the cramped conditions and poor baseline health of the animals.

Biosecurity violations are one of the most frequent accusations made against activists by the industry. In one instance, investigators were ordered to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars of restitution for lost profit after a factory farm “depopulated” (killed) a barn of egg laying hens in response to a supposed violation of biosecurity, even though the activists had evidence the used good practices, and that they had entered a different barn than the one “depopulated” by the company (side note, the investigators received no jail time and as of late 2023 have not paid any of the restitution). As an investigator, you must understand and be able to explain the risks of bringing germs in and out of facilities, and the protocols your team can follow to minimize exposure. Refer to the Biosecurity Checklist for more information.

Before the Investigation

Directly before an investigation, ensure your team has cleaned all equipment that will be used during the operation. Camera gear should be wiped down with hydrogen peroxide or bleach-based disinfectant, clothes should be washed, vehicles should be disinfected, and team members should shower *with soap and warm water*. Your goal should be for investigators to shower, change into clean clothes, grab their gear, and enter their vehicle all without having to come in contact with an un-sanitized surface. This ensures that any relevant pathogens that you may have encountered in daily life will not travel with you.

Pre-package your Personal Protective Equipment (Microporous film coveralls, boot covers, face coverings, gloves, any sanitized shirt you want to wear for video purposes) in 1-gallon Ziplock bags for ease of use in the field.

Before Entering a Structure

Between the sanitized vehicle and a barn, investigators will likely have to traverse dirty terrain which could contain diseases from the farm, wild animals, and other incidental germs. Before entering a barn or other enclosed farm structure containing animals, investigators should put on PPE (personal protective equipment):

1. Microporous film (Tyvek) coveralls
2. Boot covers
3. Surgical or N95 face coverings
4. Gloves

Any unnecessary bags or equipment should be left outside in a safe place.

If investigators plan on visiting multiple barns within one trip, they should start in the barns with the youngest animals and work their way up through the age range. Older animals are more likely to have contracted disease, which can easily be spread to younger animals who are weaker. If barns are organized into different groupings, with connections between them, it is ideal to avoid visiting barns from multiple groupings in a single visit, to reduce the chances of spreading contaminants from one to another.

Inside a Structure

Inside the barn, care should be taken to avoid unnecessary exposure. Assume every surface is covered in dangerous pathogens. Avoid contact with animals when possible. Change gloves between touching different animals. Consider wearing two layers of gloves if you plan on touching multiple animals, so that the outer layer can be changed without exposing your skin to the barn. Avoid placing bags or equipment on

the ground or other dirty surfaces. Avoid exposing difficult-to-clean equipment to the environment (e.g., changing batteries in a camera).

Keep an eye out for insects like mites and avoid contact with them. If you become swarmed or covered in them, change all your biosecurity gear, and thoroughly clean / check your equipment to avoid spreading them to other areas.

If you are traveling between two interconnected areas of a barn / group of barns, it is generally sufficient to change only your boot covers.

Keep an eye out for ripped or damaged PPE. If your equipment is damaged, replace it or repair it immediately.

Leaving a Structure

As your team leaves a structure, you should promptly remove your PPE, starting with your boot covers, then your coveralls, mask, and your gloves last to prevent touching dirty gear with your bare hands. Dirty PPE and any dirty equipment you don't need to use again should be loaded into a trash bag, sealed, and carried out with you for disposal / sanitation elsewhere. Any dirty equipment that you need to continue using should be quickly wiped or sprayed down.

Repeat this procedure between each barn you enter.

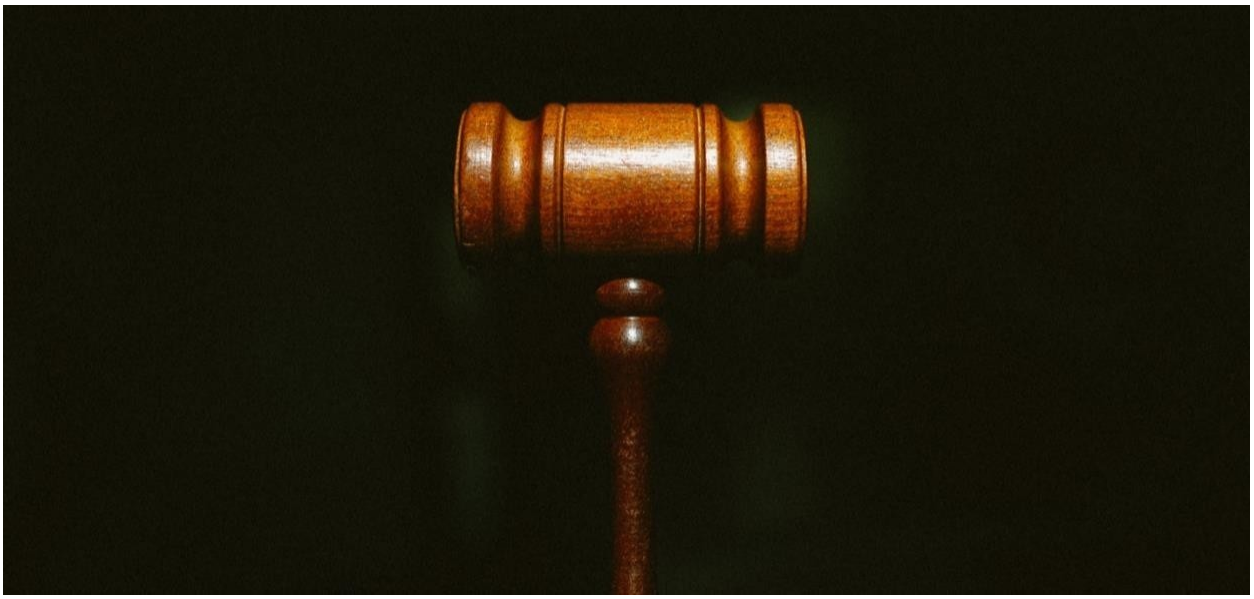
Arriving Back Home

Upon arriving at the staging location, investigators should consider themselves, all their equipment, and anything they touch, infected until sanitized. Clothes should quickly be washed, equipment quarantined and sanitized, the vehicle sprayed down and scrubbed, and investigators should shower with soap and warm water. Avoid coming in contact with hard-to-clean surfaces before you are sanitized.

Sanctuary and Exposure to Other Animals

In the few days after an investigation, it is ideal to avoid coming in contact with other animals of the same species in case you are infected with a relevant disease. If you need to drop rescued animals off at a sanctuary, see if you can do so without having to enter the property.

Legal Defense



Investigatory work can carry significant legal risk, and it is important that team members understand how to safely interact with law enforcement and prepare a strong legal case to use in the event that that they are stopped in the field or face later prosecution. This section was written based on the United States legal system. Consult a lawyer in your area.

Legal Preparation

Preparing a legal defense is one of the most important parts of planning an investigation. At the bare minimum, you should have a plan for how you intend to react to arrests being made and a prosecution being brought against your team. Do your best to get in touch with a lawyer, have a call between them and your team in advance of the investigation to ask hypothetical questions and make sure team members understand their rights and the risks involved.

Understand that a jury may be sympathetic to your actions but won't likely be aware of jury nullification (when jurors, based on their own sense of justice, acquit a defendant even when the evidence presented seems to point to an incontrovertible verdict of guilty), so it may be crucial to have a legal explanation for your actions to help jurors follow their heart while also feeling they are following the law. In order to win their hearts, prepare a defense that has a moral appeal, one that leaves them knowing you did the right thing, regardless of any charges.

Consider doing some groundwork to set up your legal defense, even months in advance if possible. Talk to your team and get on the same page about whether you just want to plead guilty to any charges and try to minimize consequences, or whether you want to go to trial and

make a spectacle of the potential prosecution.

If you are willing to go to trial, consider the narrative and legal defenses you are setting up around this investigation. Have you exhausted all your legal options for reporting this facility by emailing or writing letters to the local government and law enforcement? With evidence of these efforts, you may be able to use a “necessity defense” to argue you had no other legal recourse to prevent harm besides taking nonviolent action.

Have you been able to expose illegal animal abuse on the part of the farm? You may be able to argue you were in the right by investigating, or campaign for the facility to be shut down.

Consider the possibility of making an affirmative defense, one in which you don’t deny doing what you did but you offer a legal defense based on a new angle, relying on facts or issues not in the complaint that a jury could find sympathetic or compelling. Example: If it’s a crime to disrupt a lawful business, you could argue that the company is not a lawful business because it’s committing crimes against the animals.

Are there other obscure laws in your jurisdiction that can help defend you? Do some research into your local animal cruelty laws.

Ultimately, remember anything you say or type may come into play later. Always take the moral high ground and remember the old saying, “dance like no one is watching and communicate like everything you say or type will be read aloud in court.”

Encounters in the Field

It is very rare that investigators will be stopped by law enforcement during an investigation, but in this event, it is important to know how to react. If you are with your team lead, let them do the talking. At minimum, the team lead should have attended an activist Know Your Rights training relevant to the area. Always be polite to law enforcement officers but remember that for the most part giving them information will only make things worse. Avoid outright lying as this can lead to issues; instead, politely tell them that your friend, who is a lawyer, advised you to never answer questions from police. Ask them if you are free to go, and if you are not, reiterate that you will not be answering any questions other than your name, date of birth, and address (the info they could find on your ID). Ideally, carry your ID with you (in a secure zipped pocket to ensure you don’t lose it).

Prosecution / Interrogation

A whole manual could be written about how to navigate legal cases resulting from investigations and rescues, so we have only included the basics here. There is always a possibility you will face legal prosecution for exposing animal exploitation, whether you are arrested during the act of an investigation, or charges came down years after it is released. The most important thing to do when facing a scary legal situation is to remain calm, trust your team members, and remember why you took action.

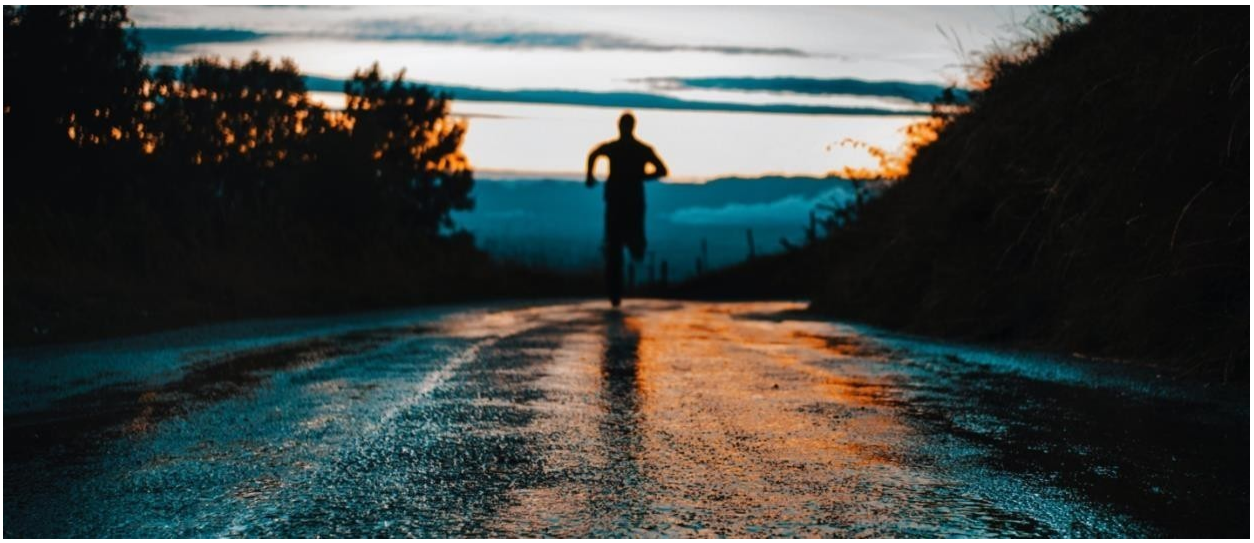
Law enforcement and prosecutors are trained to lie and scare you, and their number one goal is to break up your team and make you snitch on each other. They may tell you that they have video or DNA evidence, they may overcharge you with intimidating felonies, and they may tell you that your friends are all talking and taking deals. Stay calm, trust your team, and don't answer their questions.

Discuss your values around openness and your legal strategy with your team in advance. Discuss what amount of testimony in court could be helpful, and what you are comfortable with. It is NEVER acceptable to inform on or testify against your team to get a better deal, even if you think they are okay with it or that it will help them. Generally, any activist who informs on their team will be quickly exposed and removed from their community, let alone any future high-risk actions. If you think you might be unwilling to accept the consequences of investigatory work, do not participate in it. Know your potential co-defendants well. Over the course of multi-year prosecutions, relationships can change significantly and someone who originally felt fully committed may end up with doubts, a different personal situation, or more to lose from a prosecution.

Legal cases can drag on for years. They can require stressful and unpredictable travel and time investment and cost upwards of hundreds of thousands of dollars just for legal representation alone.

This website features an up-to-date list of DxE's rescue-related court cases as well as the outcomes of some that have wrapped up.

Physical Ability



It should always be a goal to make activism as inclusive as possible, but some investigatory work is inherently restrictive when it comes to ability levels. Investigators may need to walk for miles with heavy equipment. They may also need to run, climb tall fences, or duck and hide quickly to avoid being caught. Not everyone will be capable of these activities, so talk to your team lead and honestly assess your ability to keep up in the expected conditions. There are crucial roles like driver and lookout, and some investigatory circumstances, that are much more open to people with different abilities.

Walking

Generally, investigators will have to walk off the route of any defined path, in rugged terrain, in the middle of the night, with no lights, for up to many miles, carrying whatever equipment they need and anyone whom they were able to rescue. When walking as a team, there are a few protocols that will keep you moving safely and efficiently.

First off, walk in a single file line, with the navigator in front. This will lessen the amount of tracks to be followed, reduce the chance of running into an obstacle, and ensure that if there is an obstacle, only the first person hits it. A tight single file line where people are within reaching distance also enables simple non-verbal communication, like tapping someone on the shoulder, or standardized hand and arm signals.

Second, especially when running, land with your heel first, flexing your foot fully and bracing your ankle to resist rolling. Try to keep your weight on your back foot as much as possible to make sure you don’t fall if your front foot lands on or in an unexpected obstacle.

A benefit of walking as opposed to running is that if you are seen, you are more likely to be mistaken as a worker or someone who belongs there. It is abnormal for a group of people to be running through a facility in the middle of the night, but walking is more normal.

As simple as it may sound, it is highly recommended that investigators practice walking in these circumstances before entering the field. A simple, group hike at night where investigators practice traversing various terrain off-trail can teach you a lot, and it's best to learn in a safe environment.

Running

Investigations will not always involve running, but investigators should always be prepared to run in the event that they are spotted or need to respond to an urgent incident. Investigators should be able to run a mile on uneven terrain in under 12 minutes. When training for running, don't worry about long distances, as runs longer than 1-2 miles are almost never required. Practice running in various environments, levels of light, weather types, and clothing, and while carrying backpacks and heavy items. The more prepared you are to run, the more you can assist your team members instead of holding them back.

Climbing

Scaling fences, walls, and structures is an important skill for investigators, and it is hard to predict exactly how this will go when in the field. It should always be the goal not to cause any unnecessary damage to fences or other property when entering, because, among other reasons, it may give away your entrance path and lead to reinforced security in the future. Always take time to find the easiest way in. There is no reason to climb a fence if you can find an unlocked gate a few hundred feet away. Before climbing a tall fence, check underneath to see if there is room to crawl under. Crawling under or through a fence is preferred because it generally leads to much less noise and is less visible from a distance. Long fence lines are often neglected and almost always have a loose section somewhere along the bottom, so it is worth following the fence until an ideal spot is located.

The most common obstacle an investigator will face in the field is a 3-5 strand barbed wire fence, usually meant to keep grazing cows confined in pasture areas. If the wires are loose, you might be able to climb under or through. If not, step close to a stable post, and make sure to move slowly and to not add undue force.

If you are caught on the barbs, ask a teammate for help and move the part of you that was caught back in the opposite direction to the way you had been moving it to free yourself. Often, investigators attempt to get unstuck by just pushing the clothing harder

in the same direction, but this can lead to serious tearing or other issues.

Larger chain-link fences are much harder to climb, but you can almost always find a section to pull up and crawl under. If you do have to climb one, send your best climber first to help others over. Work together.

Even though good climbing technique emphasizes lower body strength primarily, it is very helpful to have good upper body pulling strength. Pull-ups, barbell / dumbbell rows, and bicep curls are all helpful exercises, and are recommended for investigators.

De-escalation, Evasion, and Escape

While it is relatively rare for investigators to have a face-to-face run-in with security or employees during a nighttime farm investigation, the risks are increasing as the industry becomes more aware of the threat of investigations. If caught on a farm, the correct response can make the difference between an employee chasing you and calling the police, and them thinking nothing of your presence. Having a planned response, as well as the ability to think on your feet, will be crucial in a surprise moment like this.

De-escalation

Let's say you and your team are on a farm, you round a corner, and there is a worker standing there smoking a cigarette. Your first goal should be to act completely casual and convince them that there is no issue, and that if there is, it isn't their job to deal with you. Most employees working minimum wage are not interested in chasing down random

people in the middle of the night.

It is good to have a planned response along the lines of “Hey sorry, we were just looking for our dog who got off leash. We are on our way out.” Then promptly turn around and walk away.

If they ask a follow-up question or seem confused, just keep calmly walking away. This tactic has been extremely effective. Most people just don’t know what to do, and don’t feel like whatever is going on is their problem.

Escape

In the case that the first method did not work, you are likely being chased. Remember that your number one responsibility is to your team. As the team lead, leave no one behind; if someone is lagging or gets caught, stay with them, and send the rest of the team ahead.

If it seems like you will be unable to get away, sacrifice yourself and stay to talk with the worker or security, and send your team to try and escape. Make sure they know where to go and stay together.

If you are being chased, your best bet is to use obstacles and terrain they are uncomfortable with. Cross a river or swamp, jump a barbed wire fence. Run through brambles or blackberries. Most employees, even trained security, will not be interested in following you. You should always have an emergency meeting point decided in advance in case of these situations. See the PACE planning section for details about backup plans.

Evasion

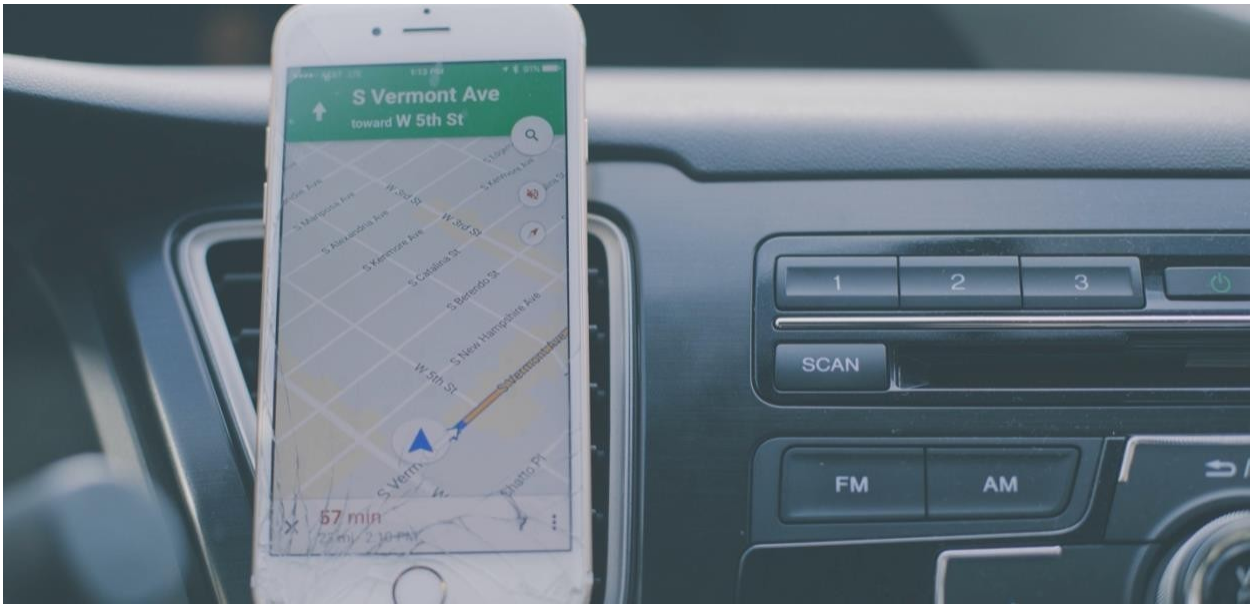
Once you have initially escaped and are no longer being directly followed, you have a few options. Assume that farm security is out looking for you, and that the police are on their way.

Your immediate objective is to get to a safe place, either far away, or where you will not be easily located. If you are able to get picked up immediately in a good location, far enough from the farm, and off the main road, that is probably the best option. If your driver is far away, or the only good pickup locations are close to the road, you might

want to plan on hunkering down for something like a few hours. Get to a place that is well wooded or concealed in another way, far from roads, and ideally off the property of the farm. If you are able to cross a few roads or streams this is also helpful. Like many people at their jobs, security and police generally don't want to do difficult work if they don't have to and will usually not spend much time looking for you, if any.

See the Emergency Supplies section for more information about hiding in place.

Navigation



In the modern world, most of us have become extremely reliant on cell phones for navigation. Few people have experience navigating at all off of roads and trails, let alone in the pitch dark in an environment they are unfamiliar with, and under stress. Navigational errors are very common, and they can cause entire nights of potential investigation to be wasted, or worse.

Assigning a Navigator

At all times during an investigation, you should have one person in charge of making sure you are headed in the right direction, are making a good pace, and are avoiding obstacles. This does not necessarily need to be the team leader, and the skills of leadership and navigation are not necessarily always present in the same people.

It is good, however, for you as the team leader to study the map seriously and do your best to understand the route and where you are.

Often, there will be disagreements among team members about where you are and what route is best to take, and it will be your job to settle those when it is urgent to do so.

Smartphones

The easiest tool to use for navigation, and likely the one we are all most familiar with, is a smartphone. Smartphones, like every tool, have pros and cons, but if used well they can do a lot of the work of navigating in the field.

Security risks aside, the biggest issues with smartphones are their reliance on cell signals which are often weak or non-existent in rural farm areas.

Offline map applications like OsmAnd or Gaia GPS allow you to download satellite and terrain maps and navigate completely independently of cell signals. Your phone is still able to use GPS functionality to geolocate you, and you can zoom in fully on satellite images.

If you are planning to bring a smartphone on your investigation, it makes a great primary navigation device, but it is important to have backups as well. See the Burner Phones section for more information about the risks of smartphones and how to safely use them on investigations.

GPS Units

Another option for electronic navigation in the field is a handheld GPS unit. While you may be more familiar with GPS units for cars, a purpose-built handheld hiking GPS will be much better suited for investigations.

The Garmin eTrex line of handheld hiking GPS units offers easy to read maps, digital compasses, and other features that make these devices great for navigation.

Map, Compass, and Pace Beads

The most reliable, secure, and time-tested method of off road navigation is to use a map, a compass with a bearing sight, and pace beads to track your distance traveled.

Traditional map and compass orienteering is a difficult skill that requires training and practice. We won't go in depth here but there are many online resources and videos, as well as local orienteering clubs around the world where you can receive more training.

Most investigators do not rely on this method or even bring it as a backup, but it is an extra level of security that may be worth exploring.

Backup Navigation

Your navigation plan, like any other, is subject to many factors outside your control and can go wrong. Your device could fail or become lost, you could end up in an unknown area, etc.

It is important to have a series of backup tools and plans for navigation, to make sure you can get to where you need to go safely.

A reliable compass and a simple printed map are a good bare minimum for backup navigation. With this you can orient yourself, look for key landmarks, and roughly make your way to them.

Driving Navigation

Along with your plan for navigating in the field, make sure to plan for how you will get there. If you are using a burner phone as your primary navigation system, consider at what point you will actually be able to turn it on, and the fact that you might want to keep it turned off until you are close to the location (more context in the Burner Phone section).

Even if the driver feels pretty confident in their ability to navigate to the general area of an investigation, a single error can quickly lead to hours of time lost in an unfamiliar area.

A thorough, local roadmap can meet the need for backup navigation. A driving GPS like the Garmin Drive series can be purchased for around $100 new, and is a good investment for situations like this. Some vehicles come pre-installed with gps navigation systems, which can work in some cases, but require testing in advance.

With any navigation aid, consider the security issues with the way information is stored on it, and wipe history regularly.

Human First Aid

Investigations are inherently dangerous, and when accidents happen, it can be difficult or impossible to obtain timely medical assistance. From climbing barbed wire to facing heavily armed farmers, it is crucial that investigators are prepared to respond to medical emergencies when seconds count and there is no way to access an ambulance or hospital. DxE investigators have dealt with sprained ankles, cuts and scrapes, vomiting, difficulty breathing, minor frostbite, falls into manure lagoons, and other medical situations in the field.

⚠ **This section is not medical advice. Please seek out professional training.**

Responding to an Injury

If a team member sustains an injury of any kind, and you are not running for your lives, stop and assess the situation. Give them attention and take them seriously. Never dismiss their concerns. It can be very scary becoming injured far from potential help.

This might be a good time for a water break and to take some deep breaths, or maybe the mission needs to be cut short.

If responding to an injury means you need to stop where you are, consider whether you are in a safe place. Don't forget your context. Place lookouts and maintain security at all times. If you are in a place where there is an ongoing imminent deadly threat, like someone shooting at you, do whatever is necessary to get your self and the injured party away, as the risk of causing further injury through moving them is almost always outweighed by the risk of staying in range of an imminent deadly threat.

If a team member sustains a serious, life-threatening injury, do whatever is necessary to get them help as quickly as possible. This likely means calling emergency services (911 in the US). If you call emergency services, it is ideal to move to a place where you can be picked up on public property and think of a cover story, but prioritize safety and consider the risk of moving the injured party.

If you need to call 911, you can instruct the rest of the team to leave and get picked up, but never leave the injured party alone.

Recommended Training

It is highly recommended that all members of an investigatory team seek out some basic emergency medical training, and that at least one person receives more advanced training.

It is important to assess the specific risks you might face, and the situations most likely to impact your team. This list comprises most of the risks of injury that you will face as an investigator.

- Sprains, broken bones, joint injuries
- Cuts, scrapes, puncture wounds
- Head and spine injuries
- Traumatic bleeding
- Hypothermia
- Dehydration, heat stroke
- Allergic reactions, bug, snake, and poisonous plant injuries
- Panic attacks, mental health emergencies
- Chronic life threatening conditions relevant to your team

Some recommended emergency medical classes to seek out include:

- Stop The Bleed
- Red Cross Basic Life Support (BLS)
- Tactical Combat Casualty Care (TCCC)
- Wilderness First Responder

Overview of an Investigation

For those investigators without the privilege of being able to shadow an experienced team, it can be difficult to imagine exactly what an investigation entails. The following fictional story illustrates what it could look like to put these protocols into action.

Jen is an activist in Oakland, California who has had enough of massive corporations torturing animals, destroying the environment, exploiting workers, and spreading dangerous diseases. After driving past a gross Whole Foods billboard every day, she has decided she wants to see for herself what chickens in a free-range egg farm go through.

After doing some research, she realizes that one of Whole Foods' top-rated egg farms is only an hour from her house. More digging reveals that they have been in the news recently due to an outbreak of Covid 19 amongst their workers, and that the owner of Whole Foods, Jeff Bezos, is consistently in the news. She decides that this could make a compelling story, if she is able to get interesting footage.

Jen knows she needs a couple more people to help with the investigation, so she thinks carefully about who to ask. There is a lot of risk involved and she wants to pick the right people in case they end up being prosecuted. The first person she decides to ask is Raul, her friend who she has known for years. He has participated in civil disobedience actions before and has always been trustworthy and reliable. Next is Kim, an experienced chicken caregiver. She considers asking her friend Gary, a great

guy, but after thinking about it for a while she realizes that he is not the most reliable person. He often comes late to activist meetings having not completed his tasks. She thinks about asking Tim, but Tim seems to always be wrapped up in personal conflict in the activist community. Finally, she decides to ask Lauren, a great photographer.

Jen reaches out to each of them, only giving them the bare minimum information that they need to decide, and they all say yes. She schedules a meeting with them, and they get to work planning the project.

Because the farm is only an hour away, there aren't many logistical hurdles. They create a materials list and Kim volunteers to gather everything they need. Raul reaches out to a lawyer who can give them advice and be on call in case they need urgent help. Lauren takes on research and finds past examples of the farm being written up for animal welfare violations, as well as fined for environmental damage. Jen reaches out to some sanctuaries, keeping her inquiries vague, and finds one who has capacity to care for an egg laying hen!

After the team does some basic drive-past scouting, they decide they should try to arrive at the farm around 1am on a Saturday to reduce the chance of being caught. Jen studies satellite imagery of the area and realizes that if they get dropped off on the northwest side, they can walk through an almond orchard right up to the back of the farm, and a drive-past confirms that this makes sense. They decide to focus on the barn farthest in the back, away from the office and anywhere likely to keep workers late at night.

On Friday evening, they meet to go over plans, have a final briefing, and get ready. They assign roles and decide that they all trust Jen to lead the team and make any quick calls. Raul will drive, Kim will be a lookout, and Lauren will go into the barn with Jen to film. After an inspiring pep talk from Jen, Kim gets to work sanitizing the equipment, and they all take turns showering and changing into their clean clothing. Gray and brown earth tones for the women going into the field and a sweatshirt and jeans so Raul looks normal as a driver.

They pile into the clean vehicle and head out. There is nervous excitement in the air, but they all feel confident in each other and that the hard work they have put into planning will keep them safe. As they approach the facility, they drive past once to scan for strange activity or lights. Lauren thinks she sees a weird light in the back, but they agree it's probably nothing. They look far down the road in each direction for oncoming cars, not wanting to be seen getting out of the car. As Raul approaches the drop-off location, Jen checks to make sure everyone has their gear, and that Raul knows where he is supposed to wait. When Raul stops the car, Kim, Jen, and Lauren quickly pile out and dash for the treeline, not stopping until they are 4 layers deep into the orchard, well hidden from the road. Just as they stop to catch their breath, they see headlights coming from down the road. They all hit the deck seconds before light washes over them. A few seconds after the lights are gone, they all get back up and head deeper in. Around 15 rows in, Jen stops the team to check in with Raul over radio and orient

themselves.

“Driver, this is lead, do you copy? Over.” Jen radios.

“Lead this is driver, I copy over.”

“Are you in position? Over.”

“Parking now, I will wait on your call, over.”

Jen takes a moment to remind people exactly where they are in comparison to the farm. She points out a light in the distance that they saw from the road “That blue light is the front of the farm, and the white light over there is a house. Remember, if anything happens, we head that way and Raul will pick us up on that road. Everyone feeling good? Alright, then let’s keep going.”

As they approach the edge of the treeline, they stop for a few minutes to watch for any activity on the farm. For a second they think they see someone standing in the dark, but they realize it’s a water tank. They cross a clearing and approach the barn quietly. They duck around to the side and Kim recognizes the spot they decided she would stay as lookout. She has a clear view of the office, and the only road into the facility. After a quick radio check with Kim, Jen, and Lauren head back around to the door.

Suddenly everything is bright, and they freeze as they realize they have set off a motion light. Lauren pulls Jen up against the wall and into the shadow. “Lead, this is lookout. I see a light back there. Are you okay?”

“Yes, we are fine. We set off a motion light. Keep your eyes toward the front and let us know if anyone comes to check it out. I bet deer set these off all the time back here.”

They stay in the shadows as they quickly slip on their protective equipment, filming the process to make sure they can prove their good biosecurity practices. Then they give Kim the heads up that they are about to head inside. The door is unlocked, typical of large operations like this where there are too many buildings to keep secure. Caws and clucks erupt as they open the door. The closest birds alert the others to an intrusion, and soon the entire barn is alive with noise. Jen and Lauren navigate the jungle of birds, moving slowly to avoid stepping on anyone. Lauren quickly points out a sick bird laying on the ground, and they get to work documenting, making sure to film at the eye level of the birds.

After half an hour, they receive a check in from Kim. “Time check, it is 2:30am. Over.”

“Copy, over.” Jen and Lauren decide to spend 15 more minutes. From scouting the facility they know the latest time they can stay is 4am. As they approach the farthest end of the barn, someone catches Jen’s eye. “Look over here, this girl’s leg is messed up.”

As Lauren approaches, the hen is spooked and begins desperately flapping her wings. She makes it a few inches away before giving up and slumping back down. She is clearly unable to walk. “The nearest water was all the way back there. No way she could reach it,” Jen says. “She looks dehydrated… I don’t think she will make it long here. We have an IV set up back in the car, right?” Lauren asks. They confirm with Kim that she brought the fluids, and that she knows how to administer them.

They take a moment to capture the scene effectively, filming a wide shot of the crowded surroundings, showing how far away the water is, and then capturing some quick close-ups of the injured bird where they found her. Jen pulls out her prepared script and after reviewing it, says some lines to the camera about how Whole Foods is deceiving consumers and calls out Jeff Bezos for enabling and profiting off of the abuse of birds like this one, before reaching down to pick her up.

They tell Kim they are coming out and she meets them at the door. They hand over the hen and Kim, whose eyes are still adjusted to the darkness, helps them remove their PPE.

They are about 100 feet from the treeline when the ground around them lights up blue and red. They instantly hit the dirt, Kim landing on her back to keep from crushing the hen, and they lay as flat as they can. “We have to get to the trees! This is flat ground there’s no cover!” Lauren whispers.

“No, I see them,” Jen responds. “If we get up, we are screwed. Just lay flat and stay still.” After 15 minutes, they catch their opportunity. Jen is certain the officer has gone into the office, and they don’t see anyone else around, so on Jen’s call, they get up and rush to the treeline, not looking back until they have lost count of the rows.

They decide to be picked up in their backup location instead, because it’s off the main road and further from where they can still see police lights flashing. Raul has to make a few passes because of other cars driving within sight of the pickup point before they can finally jump out of the bushes and climb in.

“What happened?” Kim asks, “Did they see us?” No one knows for sure. Back at Jen’s house, everyone showers and quarantines equipment while Raul hops right back in the car to take the hen to the vet.

The next day Kim finds a police report for an unrelated domestic disturbance in the area, and the team decides that it probably explains the police response.

Lauren gets to work editing a video about the investigation and Jen writes up and puts together an investigatory report. Kim reaches out to a journalist she knows, and Raul cares for the hen (taking lots of photos of her recovery along the way). They name the hen Sophie.

A journalist who has been covering the Covid outbreak at the farm is interested in the story of the rescue and decides to cover it in a national outlet. The team decides to release the investigation on social media at the same time the press story comes out to boost the reach of each. As the day of the release approaches, the team gets together for a final meeting to confirm plans, decide what they will each post on social media, and talk to a lawyer to be reminded of the possible legal consequences to expect. They decide that Jen will be the only one to post publicly about her participation, as she was the one who was featured in the video and press article, and they want to minimize overall risk. Each team member has a meeting with their housemates to remind them of how to respond in case law enforcement shows up looking for them.

Narrative

The narrative of an investigation drives decision-making throughout the process, from picking a target facility to what you will look for and focus on in video production. It is important to have a vision of the story your investigation will tell.

Basic Storytelling

There are many common themes in investigations:

- A farm is claiming to be humane/organic/free-range/cage-free/etc. but lying.
- A farm or slaughterhouse is violating specific animal cruelty laws, environmental regulations, or workers' rights laws.
- A slaughterhouse is using a surprising or unique method of killing animals.
- A farm is brewing specific dangerous diseases.
- A farm is neglecting animals on the brink of death, but activists rescue them and give them another chance at life.
- A farm is hiding their practices, but activists expose them.

It is important for an investigation to tell a story or to inform people of something they didn't know. It helps to contrast the cruelty in animal ag with something awe-inspiring like animals recovering from the brink of death or investigators taking brave action despite serious risks. It generally isn't enough to just show that farms treat animals poorly in generic ways, as most people, especially the press, are aware of this. "Cows Killed at Cow Slaughterhouse" is not a unique or particularly interesting headline.

Focusing on an Individual

One way to make your investigation an engaging story is to focus on the story of an individual animal or investigator.

A story focused on an animal might start by showing their life inside a farm, the conditions they live in, and individual struggles they may have faced. If they are injured or sick, the story could explain what likely happened to them, how it affects their life, and what will become of them in the industry as a result. If your team has the capacity to rescue them, the story could follow as they are brought to the vet and a sanctuary and contrast the life they are getting now to what would have happened to them in the industry.

A story focused on an individual investigator might start by giving a short backstory about them, any unique, relevant information about them, and what got them interested in the investigation. It can show any struggles they have had as an investigator or a unique connection they have to the industry, facility, or animals they are investigating. Like above, a rescue element adds a lot of value to this kind of story.

Keep in mind that these kinds of stories often do better on social media and are less interesting to the press, unless the individual is famous or particularly noteworthy in some way.

Focusing on a Facility or Company

Many investigations focus on a particular farm, slaughterhouse, producer, or retail company. These kinds of investigations tend to be more interesting to the press as the angle of informing consumers of poor practices or false advertising is very mainstream media friendly.

Start by researching what companies have been covered in the news recently or have good public awareness. What ongoing stories might your investigation be able to fit into? It generally makes sense to focus on large, well-known companies. It is possible for an investigation focused on a small company to reach a large audience, but generally they will not be seen as systemic issues and will therefore be written off because they aren't seen as representative of the industry or relevant to most people.

When deciding on a company to focus on, there are generally two directions to go in. The first is to choose a company that the public probably already associates with poor quality and animal cruelty, e.g., McDonald's. No one will be shocked to see an investigation find animal cruelty inside a McDonald's chicken farm, but it does fit into an ongoing narrative, and may be able to reach a large audience if there is some novel element.

The other direction is to focus on a company the general public would not associate with animal cruelty, e.g., Whole Foods. These investigations are appealing to the press because they expose something consumers will be surprised to learn. These investigations often focus on disproving specific marketing used by companies, by contrasting the pictures and language on packaging with the reality of how animals are treated. It is generally extremely easy to find massive disparities between marketing and reality, so investigators can usually write out a general narrative before even entering a farm based on what they expect to see.

With these types of investigations, thorough supply chain verification will be crucial. Pay close attention in the research section and have multiple ways to prove supply chain between the farm and retailer if you plan on pitching the story to the press.

Conditions and Violations

In any investigation, there should be a heavy focus on the conditions animals are kept in, or violations of health, safety, workplace, or environmental standards. It is crucial to have in-depth research and a good understanding of any relevant standards. Read through the state's animal cruelty laws. Is there a specified exemption for animal agriculture practices in animal cruelty laws? Do any local laws govern the space or conditions animals need to be kept in?

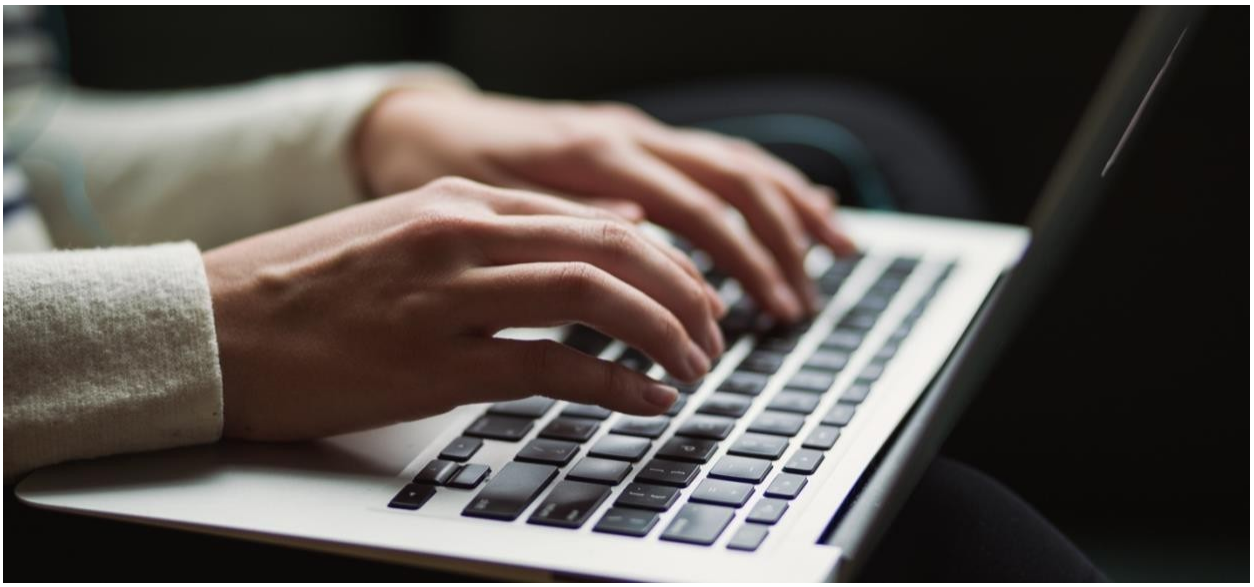
In most places, the horrific, standard practices of animal agriculture are completely legal. There are still many practices or conditions an investigation can focus on. Common elements that investigations focus on include:

- Crowding
- Use of farrowing, gestation, battery, veal, or dairy calf crates to cruelly confine animals
- Separation of families
- Forced breeding practices
- Mutilations without anesthesia
- Lack of individualized vet care for sick or injured animals

- Lack of access to food or water for sick or injured animals
- Stress-related aggression, cannibalism, or stereotypic behaviors
- Lack of access to the outdoors
- Filthy conditions
- Use of antibiotics, growth hormones, and other chemical inputs
- Spread of disease, especially those that could be dangerous to humans
- Random violence towards animals by individual workers
- Lack of stunning in the slaughter process
- Surprising or unknown practices like male chick grinding in the egg industry

Generally, investigators are encouraged to focus on clearly systemic issues like industry standard practices. Investigations focused on random violence by workers tend to cast blame on individual workers instead of on the industry as a whole. Worker violence is one of the most compelling storylines for mainstream media, however, partially because of the fact it doesn't threaten the industry as much. If an investigation does focus on the actions of individual workers, consider how to work in the fact that this violence is created systemically by the industry's exploitation of animals and workers.

Research



Research is an important part of any investigation. It is good to know as much as you can about an industry, facility, and company before moving forward with an investigation. Journalists will often require many sources to confirm even basic facts about a facility that may be obvious to an experienced investigator.

Researching Best Practices

When conducting research, there are a few best practices to keep in mind to maximize safety and effectiveness.

Remember to implement good security practices when conducting research. Read through the Digital Security and Security Culture sections. Avoid assigning research tasks to people outside of the project. Don't give away the investigation by asking obvious questions over the phone, email, or in person. Use burner phones and accounts if you plan on contacting a facility or retailer.

Keep thorough notes of all research. Keep a document of all relevant information, including sources. For key sources, collect the link but also take screenshots in case the site is taken down or changed. Look for multiple sources for all key facts. Try to poke holes in your own evidence and question everything you find. Consider when your information is from and whether things may have changed since it was published. Imagine bringing this research to a high-profile journalist who will analyze everything and be unsatisfied with anything but absolute proof for even basic claims.

Supply Chain Verification

Once you have decided on a company or facility to focus on, it can be difficult to find a supplying farm, or to link a farm to a retailer. This lack of supply chain transparency is intentional and serves to keep consumers and investigators in the dark about where animal products really come from. There are usually ways to confirm this information, however.

If your goal is to find a retailer that carries the farm or slaughterhouse you are interested in, start by researching that company in depth. Internet searches of the name of the farm are usually effective at giving you something if you dig deep enough into the results. Figure out what brand names they sell under, what processor or slaughterhouse they use, if there is a large parent company, the names of the farm owners, and any other information that could be helpful. Consider using a real estate boundary map like Landglide to determine who owns the land the farm is on, and looking for other information or land they own. Search social media sites like LinkedIn and Facebook for the company and any relevant individuals to draw connections between them and any other companies. If you know what brand name the company sells under, go to grocery stores in the area or search their websites to find listings of the brand. Look up USDA or other relevant plant codes that might refer to the facility in question, and search products at grocery stores for these codes. Search the trash behind grocery stores, restaurants, or packaging plants to find relevant labels or information. Follow or track trucks from the facility to processing plants and retailers. Consider calling the facility or relevant companies and innocently asking for more information about where to buy their products (use good security practices).

If your goal is to find a farm or slaughterhouse that supplies to a retailer you are interested in, start by collecting a list of all the brands that the retailer sells. For restaurants or retailers that only sell generic brand or prepared foods, it can be difficult to find individual brands. Consider visiting the retailer and looking for plant codes on packageddead bodies, milk, or eggs. Call the company and ask. Ask workers in person. Search trash outside retailers or their processing plants. Follow animal transport or refrigeratedtrucks.

Once you have a clear picture of the supply chain from research, do your best to confirm using multiple techniques. Confirm products in store, use internet research, photograph documents in the facility, and follow trucks along the process.

Locating Facilities

Even once you have decided on a brand of animal products, it can be very difficult to locate specific facilities to investigate. Start by simply searching the brand name followed by the word “farm” on the internet. Google Maps often lists dozens of farms for large brands. Research whether the brand owns their own farms, contracts them out, or

uses a different company name for their farms. If you are able to find out what area relevant farms are located in but unable to find the specific addresses, consider using Google Maps to find facilities and then attempting to verify using street view, web searches, or in-person scouting to confirm. Often there will be visible signage outside farms that gives away brand information. Use this guide to identify what the farms might look like from satellite imagery.

Research what kind of licenses and permits are required for the type of facility in the relevant area, and search government databases.

Search activist databases like Farm Transparency Project in Australia and Project Counterglow in the US.

Team Building

The success of any mission relies on a good team. Not only must team members be proficient at their roles, but they must also trust and work well with each other. Poor team selection or cohesion can lead to conflict, miscommunication, and mission failure, and will increase the chances the state will be able to turn investigators against each other in court.

Once you have decided to undertake an investigation, finding team members can be difficult. It is helpful to be part of an animal rights activism community so that you can get to know people better and build relationships with people you may want to work with.

Inclusion

In any high-risk or difficult action, there is a trade-off between radical inclusion, and efficiency, solidarity, and security. Most teams fall too far to one side of this polarity, either becoming sloppy with team building and including too many new and untrained people or becoming too insular and not effectively sharing skills / opportunities with new people. Working with a trusted and experienced team is great; it is always easier to work with someone who requires no training or hand holding and who you trust to be reliable and respectful of security. It is important, however, to recruit and train new investigators, and to expand our networks and capacity. There is no perfect balance between these needs, but it is important to weigh pros and cons as you build teams, and always have an eye out for new people to integrate into investigatory work.

Identifying Candidates

Consider this list of beneficial and harmful attributes when considering a potential team member.

Beneficial Attributes for Team Members

- ✓ **Well-known**
  Have you known them for more than 1 year?

- ✓ **Punctual / accountable**
  Do they follow through on their commitments?

- ✓ **Hardworking**
  Are they willing to take on challenging work, even when it's not exciting or public facing?

- ✓ **Experienced**
  Do they have significant experience in stressful situations like protests or other relevant activities?

- ✓ **Calm / levelheaded in stressful situations**
  Do they keep their cool in chaotic protests etc.?

- ✓ **Technically skilled**
  Do they possess useful skills (e.g., videography) / the aptitude to learn quickly?

- ✓ **Physically fit**
  Can they walk long distances, climb, and carry heavy equipment?

- ✓ **Good team worker**
  Do they get along well with others in a work context?

Harmful Attributes for Team Members

- × **Conflict prone**
  Are they often involved in conflict on social media or otherwise?

- × **Attention / fame seeking**
  Are they only interested in exciting, public facing work? Are they overly self-promoting on social media?

- × **Unreliable**
  Are they unable to reliably complete tasks and communicate?

- × **Involved in illegal activity**
  Are they involved in illegal activity like illicit drug dealing or graffiti that could be used against them in court? Illegal activity like drug dealing also makes them vulnerable to police pressure and deal making with police (snitching).

- × **Disrespectful of security culture**
  Do they violate privacy / security culture?

- × **Impulsive**
  Do they often make decisions / participate in actions they later regret?

Feedback

Once you have identified some potential team members, it's important to vet them to ensure they are who they say they are, and that those who know them well trust them. Ideally, you would have a strong working relationship with everyone you include, but as our movement rapidly expands, this is not always possible. It is important to get feedback from people who work closely with your potential team members, to ensure they are as accountable and levelheaded as they seem. When approaching someone for feedback, respect security culture and do not share more than is needed.

Reach Outs

When reaching out to potential team members, it is important to only share what information is absolutely necessary.

It's good to start by simply asking if someone is interested in investigatory work and explaining the basic risks. If they are interested, you can provide them with the date range during which they would need to be available. Once they confirm they are available at the relevant time, and interested in participating, you should hold an in-person briefing with all team members to explain the time commitments, roles, and risks in depth.

Vetting for Security

In a quickly growing social movement that represents a direct threat to the status quo, it is inevitable that we will attract infiltrators, undercover agents, and informants. It is impossible to know for sure whether someone is who they say they are, and we cannot allow ourselves to be frozen into inaction by suspicion and paranoia.

One commonly used litmus test is to get in touch with someone's family. If you have met their family, it is much more likely that they are committed to the cause, trust you, and that they are who they say they are. Once you have reached out to a potential teammate, you can let them know that you are completing routine vetting and ask to get in touch with a family member (unless you have already met their family before).

Ideally, this should be done by meeting them in person, but a video call can suffice. If someone shows you a picture of themselves as a teenager with their parents, and then you are able to meet their parents, it means they are either being pretty truthful, or they have a lot of resources behind their deception.

Not everyone has a relationship with their family, and there are other ways to check someone's identity. You might ask to get in touch with a longtime friend of theirs or get creative. The idea is to vet their background with third party sources.

Don't go overboard with this. Feeling overly analyzed can lead team members to feel they are not trusted, and at the end of the day, it is impossible to know for sure who someone is. Having strong, standardized procedures, however, will deter infiltrators and lead to better trust among investigators over the long term.

Logistics and Preparation

Behind any successful investigation lies hours of logistical planning and preparation. From procuring equipment and booking hotels to studying satellite maps for entrance routes, it is important to have an in-depth plan by the time your team is on the ground for a mission.

Travel and Accommodation

Depending on the distance between your team and your target location, and how many nights you wish to spend on the ground within a certain time frame, it may be worth traveling and staying closer to your destination. If you decide to find housing near your target location, you have a few options.

Staying with friends, family, or fellow activists in the area is great because it is generally free but be cautious about who you stay with. Consider the fact that staying with someone will entail them noticing the bags of equipment you bring, the equipment prep and cleaning you undertake, and the fact that you will be coming and going very late at night. Beyond the possible inconvenience to your hosts, they may become suspicious or even scared of being implicated in your activities. Consider thinking up a plausible explanation for your strange behaviors. Maybe you are filming a wildlife documentary about a local species who is easier to monitor at night.

If you are staying with other activists, they may have a better understanding and willingness to respect security culture, but they are more likely to feel left out and

resentful if they are not included in a project, or gossip to other activists about your activity.

If you decide to pay for accommodations, you are generally left to choose between renting a hotel room and a home share service like Airbnb or VRBO. Hotels can be cheaper, easier, and more secure to book, but a whole home is great because you can have more space to sleep, cook, wash clothes, and prep equipment. Never rent a single room or a split living situation in a house share as you open your team up to suspicion from the other inhabitants.

Sleeping arrangements should be made thoughtfully. No one should share a bed or other sleeping arrangement (e.g., couch or car) with someone they would not already be comfortable doing so with outside of the trip.

Wherever you decide to stay, a best practice is to stay between 30 minutes and 1.5 hours from your location. Consider the demographics in the area you choose to stay. Is the entire town centered around animal agriculture? Do tourists often visit, or is it an anomaly for out-of-towners to spend a week there? If you can book accommodations across a city, county, or even state line, that is good to prevent law enforcement from snooping as much. You don't want your car to be noticed on a farm and then spotted outside a hotel 10 minutes away the next day.

Booking a hotel can sometimes be done in cash to protect your identity, although they will then often ask for ID. It is worth considering finding someone else to rent accommodations for you so you will not be as easily linked to an area, but you should

research whether you will have to provide ID when you check in. Even if you have to provide ID in person when you check into a hotel, it makes it much harder to track if you do not use your credit or debit card as law enforcement would have to call around to relevant hotels to find you instead of just tracking your bank account.

If your location is particularly far away, it is sometimes necessary to fly. Beyond the environmental impact of flying, it is very heavily surveilled and will be likely to link you to an area and timeframe. If you have to fly, consider flying into a city or state a few hours away. This will make it harder to prove where you were or why. Also consider that you may need to fly back multiple times if you end up in a long-term legal case.

Materials

Safe and effective investigation requires a lot of specific equipment, some of which can be expensive and difficult to acquire. It is important to create a thorough list of everything you will need far in advance of your mission, to make sure you have the time and resources necessary to obtain your gear.

Read through the equipment section and sample materials lists and modify them as needed to suit your situation. Don't be afraid to get creative about what kind of equipment you use, but test everything thoroughly beforehand.

Once you have your materials list, assign owners and due dates to each item to make sure team members know what they are responsible for obtaining and by when. Some items must be ordered weeks in advance and then will take additional days of modification. Other equipment can be purchased at a convenience store the night before an investigation. Regardless, do not procrastinate on obtaining your gear. Make it your goal to have your hands on fully prepared equipment at least a few days in advance. Ensure key team members have sufficient time to practice with their equipment and consider providing training resources or connecting them with people experienced in the use of their equipment.

Some safety and security guidelines to follow with all equipment:

1. Avoid purchasing expensive, easily traceable, or legally risky equipment with your own identification or payment info, or shipping it to your house.

2. Avoid storing tools like lockpicks and bolt cutters in your home without context. Keep your lockpicks with the practice locks you use to make it clear they are for hobby/ personal purposes. Keep your bolt cutters next to your hobby metalworking tools or the roll of fencing you are installing.

3. For large items you will use in the field, avoid bright colors and reflective material. Earth tones are the best, and dark gray is a favorite of many investigators. Surprisingly, black stands out, even in the dark, and especially if you are hit with a light. Almost no terrain you will find yourself in is jet black, and darkness will darken your earth tone clothing the same way it will your surroundings.

4. Avoid clothing, bags, vehicles, and equipment that make you stand out. If you find yourself in a progressive city, don't wear camouflage cargo pants. If you find yourself in a rural farm area, avoid driving your Prius and wearing a tie. Always avoid "burglar" looking clothing like all black and ski masks.

5. Avoid unnecessary microphones, cameras, and GPS units on electronics. A smart device like an Apple Watch could be spying on your team through the microphone and tracking you with GPS and it is unnecessary in an investigation.
    a. Strategic use of devices like go pros and body cams is possible but make an informed decision with your whole team.

6. Modify your clothing, equipment, and vehicles as necessary to avoid lights, reflections, and noises.
    a. Use electrical tape around zipper pulls to silence your backpacks.
    b. Check if your camera has a mode to keep the screen off when it turns on.
    c. Remove batteries from lights and other electronics until you need them.
    d. Set a black background / lock screen on your phone to minimize light pollution.
    e. Check if lights turn on in your vehicle when the doors open and cover them with gaffers tape if needed.
    f. Ensure that your headlamps and flashlights turn on and off with a single button press, instead of having to cycle through modes.

Mission Planning

Proper planning often makes the difference between being a confident team accomplishing its goals, and a scared group of activists getting lost, caught, injured, or distracted. It is crucial that by the time you are on a farm, your entire team knows exactly where to go, where to expect threats, what to prioritize filming, and where to run if something goes wrong.

Mapping a Facility

First off, create a map of the facility and label key elements:

1. **Property lines**
2. **Threat areas**
    a. Offices or buildings where you think workers might be
        i. What buildings look weird?
        ii. Where are most of the cars parked?
        iii. Scout at the relevant time of night and watch for activity
    b. Roads into the facility
    c. Houses
    d. Lights or areas where it is difficult to hide

3. **Key areas of interest**
    a. Barns you want to visit
        i. Consider sticking to barns further from threat areas or closer to escape routes
        ii. Consider prioritizing barns that are grouped close together so you can peek into multiple and decide which to enter
    b. Buildings or areas you are interested in
        i. Important documents are often kept in offices
        ii. Is one barn different or isolated from the others?
4. **Public roads**

Entrance and Exit

Consider which areas it might be safe to park in or be dropped off at. You don't want to be seen jumping out of a car along a rural road in the middle of the night. Try to find a

long stretch of road far from houses or buildings, without much traffic, where you can pull over quickly. Use Google street view to confirm the spot makes sense when possible, but don't rely on this as things often change.

Consider possible routes from drop-off points to the area of interest. Avoid walking through thick forest or completely flat fields whenever possible. Sparse forest or commercial orchards are perfect because they offer effective concealment while also allowing you to move quickly and safely in multiple directions. Consider following the edge of a treeline if you have to walk through open ground. Stay away from high ground, and always consider the outline your figure is presenting against the sky or ground.

Think carefully about obstacles and threats along your route:

1. Standard waist-high barbed wire or electric fencing is easily crossed, but high chain link is harder and creates more noise / visual signature.

2. Look for cows and other large animals grazing along your route.
    a. Cows are generally friendly but can become scared and feel the need to defend themselves.

3. Consider other local animals and the risks associated.
    a. Consider that while coyotes, bears, moose, and snakes can seem scary, ticks are probably more dangerous in most places.

4. Avoid crossing water whenever possible.
    a. If crossing a body of water is necessary, seek up-to-date information about the depth, speed of flow, and other factors that could impact ability to cross safely.

5. Consider hunting seasons and areas. The last thing you want is to walk through the night vision scope of a hog hunter in the middle of the night.
    a. Hunters often focus on clearings of forested areas.
    b. Hunting in the dark is rare, but wild hog and coyote hunters often kill at night using night vision, helicopters, off-road vehicles, and other military style equipment.
        i. These kinds of hunters are especially dangerous because they are often killing animals as a thinly veiled substitute to carrying out their tactical warfighter fantasies.
        ii. Scanning an area with night vision or infrared capable cameras is often a good way to spot these hunters.
    c. More standard hunters often hike into position early in the morning to be ready for sunrise.

Come up with 4 or more possible routes in and out of the facility. Scout thoroughly on

satellite imagery, streetview, and in person when possible. Get feedback from your team and land on a couple options you like best.

PACE

Routes, communication methods, and other key details often need to change on the fly during an investigation. When making backup plans, consider that not every time something goes wrong is an emergency. Often the drop-off location needs to change for an incidental reason, like a local car broken down in the wrong place or slightly more traffic than you were expecting. When making backup plans, it is helpful to use the PACE planning system to create a Primary, Alternate, Contingency, and Emergency option for any mission critical element. Consider making a PACE plan at least for pickup / drop off; communications between driver and ground team; communications between inside team and lookout; transportation; and target areas / barns to enter.

Here is an example of a PACE plan for communications between the driver and team on the ground:

1. **Primary**
    a. The team will use handheld radios to communicate to the driver in the field
    b. Confirmation:
        i. Driver will initiate comms check when they reach their parking spot
        ii. Team lead will initiate comms check when they reach the barn

2. **Alternate**
    a. The team will switch to signal messenger if radio doesn't have enough range
    b. Conditions for implementation:
        i. Driver will message signal group if there is no response to their parking comms check
        ii. Team lead will message signal group if there is no response to their arrival comms check

3. **Contingency**
    a. Driver will begin to drive past the farm every 30 minutes on the X:00 and X:30 mark, flash their high beams once and radio to the team in case decreased distance solves the problem, parking at predetermined location A in between passes
    b. The ground team will abort the mission until contact is made, searching for higher ground for radio range or a place to spot the driver passing by
    c. Conditions for implementation:
        i. If there is no response to signal within 1 hour of the driver's first communication
        ii. If there is no contact from the driver within 30 minutes of

estimated parking time

4. **Emergency**
    a. Driver will park at predetermined location A and await the team until at least 6am, returning to pass by slowly and flashing their high beams every 30 minutes on the X:00 and X:30 mark if they are forced to leave
    b. Team will walk to predetermined location A and meet the driver.
    c. They will hunker down in the bushes at least until daylight, and walk to the nearest town if they are unable to make contact / forced to leave
    d. Conditions for implementation:
        i. If there is no contact after 4 passes (3 hours after estimated parking time)

**Note that this plan only serves to connect the driver and ground team assuming both are able to freely move. Additional planning is needed to account for the possibility of the driver or team becoming detained / incapacitated which would also result in loss of communications.*

Scouting

Scouting your location in advance is necessary for understanding terrain, security, work schedule, and other safety information.

When scouting a location, the last thing we want is to end up tipping the farm off before the investigation happens. As with any investigatory work, dress the part by not wearing any animal rights or progressive movement logos. Remove any identifiable stickers from your vehicle, and ideally drive something that blends in. Make a plan for how you will get a look at things, whether you are driving past, parking nearby, or even dressing as a cyclist or hiker and getting a view that way. Avoid making many passes in quick succession, staring, taking pictures out the windows in an obvious way, or being seen using binoculars.

Before scouting, make an outline of your investigatory plan and make it your goal to confirm key elements like what time to arrive and leave by, where to drop off, and what areas to avoid. Check cell reception and scan the area for obstacles that may interfere with your radio reception. Keep an eye out for any other details you were unable to glean from the map. Is the orchard you were planning on walking through now bare of leaves and easy to see through? Is there a ditch next to the road you will have to carefully cross? How far can you see down the road to spot incoming cars?

Flying a drone over a facility during scouting can be a great way to get an in-depth and up-to-date layout, and even to watch for worker activity, but be careful not to be

spotted launching it or to have it noticed in the air.

Scouting overnight or for long periods of time is difficult in many areas, and it might be worth placing a trail camera or time lapse camera to get a longer-term view of the facility's activity. If all you need to know is the activity levels at various times of the day though, it might be worth just driving past every hour for 1 day or night.

Sometimes, there is no way to physically scout a facility in advance of an investigation. A few drives around or past just before entering is better than nothing and can help you notice unexpected activity or a problem with your plan.

Training

Investigators may have little or no experience in the circumstances of an investigation. The skills required to successfully navigate, travel safely in the dark, communicate, react to danger, and accomplish mission specific objectives are rare, and require experience to be done well. It is best to make inevitable mistakes in a safe training environment first, instead of in a factory farm or slaughterhouse.

Basic Training

Regardless of the role investigators are assigned, they need to become comfortable moving and communicating as a team, navigating in dark rural areas, walking, running, and climbing on rough terrain, and reacting to danger.

An easy way to practice the basics of these skills is to get your team together and go for a nighttime hike off trail in an environment similar to what you expect in your area of operation. Whether you are dealing with a forest, desert, mountains, or swamps, you will quickly realize that hiking without a well-maintained trail or lights to see where you are going is difficult. Go slow and focus on the basics. Stay in a single file line, watch for obstacles, and clearly communicate them to the team behind you. Be as quiet as possible and keep everyone serious. Failure to remain serious and follow agreements in training is a huge red flag for an investigator and means they probably have some work to do before they should be included in a mission.

Once your team is comfortable moving stealthily, you can experiment with adding extra challenges. Practice using your radios, climbing fences, moving stealthily through well-lit areas, and reacting to passing cars by ducking down. You can even create a mock farm

complete with walls and doors if you can find an empty public tennis court. Have some team members act as farm security and try to evade them or avoid being noticed. You can practice being caught and what you will say / do as well.

If you have a specific location in mind as the target of your investigation, scout it to determine any major obstacles and then find a way to practice bypassing them. If team members are worried about any specific outcome, take extra time to practice how to react until everyone feels good.

Role Specific Training

Some roles require specific training. As a team, you will need to assess the skills of each of your members and decide who needs extra training for their role. Investigation requires very unique skills, and everyone has room for improvement. You might be a great driver, but have you driven off road, very quickly, or without headlights in the dark? You may be a great photographer, but have you taken photos of fast-moving animals in extreme low light?

Are you familiar with the exact equipment you are using, in the relevant circumstances? Have you checked whether your camera has any blinking lights that will give you away in the dark? Can you turn on your camera without the back screen lighting you up? Do cabin lights come on when you open your car door? Have you practiced turning off your flashlights quickly if you need to hide? Do you know how to operate your burner Android phone as an iPhone user?

Regardless of experience levels, consider planning a walkthrough that will provide a basic test of everyone's proficiency in their roles. Skills like photography and videography are especially important because if the video comes out unusable, the whole mission may be considered a failure. Support team members in improving their skills by researching and collecting training material and coming together to train. You can learn almost anything from YouTube, but you need to practice in person to grasp a skill properly.

If an investigator is very resistant to training or insists they are an expert, that is a red flag you should note. Everyone has room for improvement. The best investigators are always learning and honing their skills.

The Investigation

This section contains the steps involved in actually executing an investigation. It is highly recommended that you create your own checklist based on your team's plans, and that you commit these plans to memory. Every member of your team should be able to explain the plan, their role, and what to do if something goes wrong.

Briefing

An in-depth briefing the night of an investigation which runs through the plans and gives team members the opportunity to ask questions is critical to your team feeling confident in the field. Even experienced investigators working with trusted teammates should have a briefing before every single mission.

Fill out and use this Briefing checklist every time so you don't forget key information.

Purpose

A good briefing should always start by explaining the purpose behind the mission. Take a step back and remind the team how horrible the system of animal exploitation is, and why it is important to do something, and how you hope the investigation will make a difference. If you have any specific goals for the night, this is a good time to lay

them out and inspire people.

Plan Summary

Run through a brief walkthrough of the plan to get people on the same page. Tell people about the target, including any key facts that make it interesting. Give a brief explanation of the timelines, when you need to leave by, when you will arrive, and at what time you expect to be back.

Roles / Chain of Command

If you have already talked to people about their roles, now is a good time to remind them and explain the responsibilities. If you haven't assigned roles, lay out what responsibilities there are and see who is interested in what. It's good to give people new opportunities, but an investigation isn't the best time to try out a new skill like driving or photography. Lean on people's strengths. Give them opportunities to build skills in downtime when it's safe to do so.

Talk about chain of command and get buy-in on the idea of having a team lead who can make calls when there is imminent danger. Discuss what the decision-making protocol should be when there is no imminent threat. Many teams utilize consensus or direct democracy and avoid authority or centralized leadership unless it is needed for efficiency. If you agree there should be a team lead, discuss who would fit the role best. If one person is much more experienced or knows the plan better, it is good to defer to them.

Communication

Remind team members of your communication plan, when they should communicate and how, and the backup plans. Make sure everyone feels confident using their radios and phones.

Thorough Walkthrough

Gather around a map or satellite imagery and give a thorough walkthrough of the plans. Show people where the vehicle will approach from, drop-off locations, where the driver will park, and the walking route including any obstacles along the way. Explain the layout of the facility, including barns / buildings you are interested in, offices, threat areas to look out for, fences, etc. Take extra time to show the lookout(s) where they will be placed, what they are looking for, and where the rest of the team will be.

Explain what to do when things go wrong. Where should people go if they are caught? What if they are isolated from the rest of the team? What do they say if a worker catches them?

By the end, you should be able to quiz any team member about what to do in various situations, and they should be able to show yoeumergency meeting locations on the map.

Risks

Remind team members of the risks inherent in investigation. Remind folks of the legal risks, the assessment of risk you received from a lawyer and your plan if you are prosecuted. Go through a quick refresher on everyone's rights and how they should respond if they are arrested or stopped by police. Give extra guidance to the driver, as they are by far the most likely to be stopped by police, but they are also the safest because they are just driving or parked somewhere.

Remind people of the physical risks as well, like being injured while walking or climbing, being attacked by angry workers, etc. Remind the team of your protocols for being caught by farm workers.

Final Prep

As you end your briefing, pull out your task list and run through remaining preparation tasks. Usually, the team still needs to shower and change so make a schedule for who will go first and remind people to be quick if you are in a rush. If gear needs to be prepped or sanitized, assign those tasks. Make sure everyone knows when they need to be ready to leave and give reminders as you approach go time.

Travel

As you travel to the location, make sure to check in with team members. This is often the most stressful part of an investigation as the team builds up anticipation and has nothing to distract them. 15 minutes or so away from the location, turn off any music and make sure everyone is in action mode. Run through the equipment everyone should have, make sure no one has lingering questions, and quiz the driver on where they will park.

Drop Off

If possible, drive past the facility at least once before dropping off. Have everyone (except the driver) carefully watch the facility as you pass by, looking for unexpected

vehicles, lights, or movement. As you approach the drop-off point, watch down the road in both directions for incoming cars. You may have to pass by your drop point a few times to make sure no one sees you stop the vehicle and run off into the bushes.

Do a final check to make sure everyone has their gear and hop out as soon as the vehicle stops. Make sure to close all the doors quietly, and let the driver know they can head out. Head for cover as quickly as possible but move carefully. If you find yourself in an exposed area and a car comes, just lay down as flat as you can and don't move until the car is gone.

Traveling on Foot

Once you are safely into a concealed area, stop everyone and take a second to orient yourselves to your surroundings. Remind everyone which direction you came from, which direction you are going, and point out key landmarks if possible. As you move, stay in a single file line whenever possible. Move at a good speed but don't leave anyone behind or risk injury. Assign the person walking in the back to keep an eye over their shoulder.

Approaching the Facility

As you approach the facility, take a couple minutes to watch from a concealed position. Point out and explain weird lights or noises you notice. If it is your first time approaching this particular facility and you don't know what to expect, consider sending 1 or 2 of the quickest team members to make sure everything is safe while the rest of the team waits behind cover. If there are workers in an unexpected area, it's good to have 1 quick person able to escape instead of 4 people slowing them down.

Placing Lookouts

Once you have confirmed the area is clear, walk your lookouts over to the area they will stay. Remind them what direction they should focus on, what sounds to expect as normal, and what they should warn you if they see. Step away and look at them to make sure they are well hidden.

Entering Structures

On most commercial farms in the US, doors are left unlocked at all times. Many doors don't even have locks. If you do run into a locked door, there are almost always other ways in. If you are a trained lockpicker and willing to add that risk, that is your decision. But regardless of your ability to pick locks or saw off a padlock, consider other ways into the building. Many large chicken and turkey barns have open sides covered in a thin

canvas tarp material. Many egg farms have doors designed to let birds outside. Many pig farms have locked exterior doors, but if you are able to get into one barn, you can access all of them through connected walkways.

Remember to put on your PPE and follow Biosecurity Practices before entering structures containing animals.

Obtaining Deliverables

It's time to get to work investigating. You should have a clear plan of what you are looking for and where you will go. Often, when navigating a facility, there is no way to avoid walking in lit up areas. Remember that for workers and security, it is just another normal night. They aren't staring out windows looking for activists. Prioritize being quiet as you move. Light lets you be seen, but only if someone is looking. Noise gets people looking. Inside barns and other structures, be cautious and always have an exit plan. Avoid shining lights near windows in a way that could be seen from outside. Be intentional and don't waste time or get distracted while inside a barn. Ask your lookout to give you periodic time checks if you have a specific timeline of when to leave by.

Sometimes, investigators end up spending many hours inside barns. There are often hundreds or thousands of animals in distress, and there is a lot to capture. Remember to stay focused on your shot list and key deliverables and don't get distracted.

Leaving

Once you are done investigating, it can be nice to have your lookout meet you at the exit of the barn so they can keep an eye out as you remove your PPE. Pack all your gear up and head back into cover. Contact your driver to let them know you are on your way back.

Pick Up

As early morning begins in agricultural areas, traffic picks up quickly. In some areas, 4-4:30am is peak rush hour as workers drive to agricultural jobs. Being picked up often becomes difficult when traffic is heavy. Your strategy will have to adjust based on the layout and terrain, but it generally makes sense to have the team wait behind cover close to the road until the driver is able to stop near them at a time when no other cars are passing. Often there is no good cover for a couple hundred feet, so you may have to try and time things perfectly with a run.

Immediate Follow Up

As soon as the team is back home, they should follow biosecurity disinfectant protocols. Equipment should be gathered up, and footage on SD cards should be backed up to hard drives and uploaded. Directly after filming is often the best time to organize footage, as you have a fresh memory of what was interesting.

Debriefing

Schedule a debrief within a week of the investigation. Use this time to catch up with the team and see how they are doing. As the team lead, make it clear that you know there are always areas to improve on, and you won't take criticism personally. Walk through each phase of the planning and investigation process and ask what people think went well and what could be improved. Take thorough notes and read them before the next project to make sure you learn from mistakes.

Once you have been through the bulk of the feedback, take some time to emotionally check in and discuss anything that has been weighing on you. Investigators experience a lot of trauma, and because of security culture they usually can't discuss it with their friends or loved ones in their usual emotional support network. If you notice anyone is feeling particularly upset, let them know they can message you any time, and make a point to check in with them afterwards.

Press / Social Media

The New York Times

Rescuing Farm Animals From Cruelty Should Be Legal

Feb. 14, 2023

Inside a Foster Farms facility in Livingston, Calif., in 2021. Direct Action Everywhere

Give this article 758

Investigations can have many goals, but often the biggest one is to reach a wide audience through the press or on social media. Prior planning can make a huge difference in the effectiveness of your social media posts and press pitching, so it is important to think about these goals early in the process of an investigation.

Capturing Content

Before undertaking an investigation, think about what your narrative will likely be and make a plan for what kind of photos, video, audio narration, and other content you need to capture in order to tell the story effectively. Do you plan on editing and releasing a video? Do you plan on producing a written report with photos? What documents, medications, areas of the farm etc. do you want to focus on, and how do you want to capture them? What content is mandatory to capture, and what would just be a nice extra? What could the team stumble upon that would be worth taking extra time to capture? Are you featuring a specific investigator, and do you want footage of them doing something specific? Who or what do you not want to capture?

Make an in-depth shot list that explains everything you want to film and talk through it with your camera operator. Make sure it is clear what shots are the most important to prioritize in case the investigation has to be cut short. Use the Example Shot

Checklist to make your own.

Make sure the camera operator is experienced with their equipment, is using the correct record settings, and has practiced in noisy, dark, and stressful situations.

Ensure that anyone who will be speaking to the camera knows what to say and will notneed to read off of a script. If there are specific talking points or lines you need to film, make a script, and bring it with you to reference.

Video Editing

Often, a video is the main product of an investigation. It can be helpful to make an entire video script or even a storyboard before the investigation begins so you can add all key scenes that you think you will need to the shotlist and not miss anything. Video editing can take a long time, so it is good to ask an experienced editor. Cutting clips, overlaying text, adding voiceover, adjusting audio and adjusting exposure are all normal aspects of video editing, but obviously never use CGI or other effects to change the content of what is seen in the video.

Consider the goal of the video and on what platform you plan to publish it. Most social media sites have specific requirements and standards for videos they will accept and algorithms that promote videos with certain aspect ratios, lengths, and kinds of content more than other videos. Consider how much overtly graphic content you will include, as graphic footage runs the risk of having your video removed on some sites or covered with a graphic warning on others. A graphic warning can destroy a video's reach.

What style will this video be? A long form documentary requires a different style, pace, and amount of content than a TikTok video.

Consider STEPPS, an acronym that lays out six key factors that drive people to talk about and share something. Which factors are you using in your video that are going to make people want to share?

Social Media Release

Think about the best time to release your investigation publicly. Maybe you want it to come out around a significant event (e.g., a turkey farm exposé in the week before "Thanksgiving") or in connection to another campaign with a specific time frame. Sometimes your release date is not completely in your control because you are dependent on a press outlet that is covering the investigation. In this case, just have everything ready to go in advance so you are ready to publish when the time comes.

If you do know the release date in advance, you can hype people up beforehand without sharing any confidential details. This could look like making a post on social media saying, “A new investigation is coming out Wednesday that takes you inside the foie gras industry.” Ask people to be ready to share it at the time it is coming out, so it gets a good boost right away. Early engagement can help signal to the social media algorithm that people are interested in this content, making it more likely the video gets promoted to a wider audience. Ask other groups or individuals with big followings on social media to boost your post by sharing or crossposting / collaborating.

Put thought into your caption and thumbnail image. Again, consider STEPPS with your caption. These pieces of a video, along with the first few seconds that people see, are very important for grabbing people’s attention and getting them to watch the video.

Will you have a call to action? In other words, are you asking people to do something, such as calling Whole Foods and asking them to drop the specific supplier you investigated or directing them to sign a campaign petition? Think about what people can do to help so that you use the momentum of the release effectively.

If people are being public in the investigation and are comfortable being tagged and publicly highlighted, make sure to shout them out so they feel acknowledged and supported. Although it can be dangerous to label individuals as “heroes,” it is good to acknowledge people’s sacrifices and hard work, especially if this is their first investigation (or first public one). Participating in an investigation can be a life-changing experience and solidify someone’s commitment to the movement. Showing them support and appreciation can help make it a positive experience.

Social media serves so many roles: exposing new people to the message of animal liberation, inspiring current activists, empowering people who contributed to the project, and fueling campaigns by directing people to take action. So even if social media is not your primary goal with an investigation, it is usually worth doing as part of an investigation release.

Press Pitch

The DxE Press Handbook gives an in depth look at press pitching for investigations andother actions.

What we call a press pitch gives a concise preview of a future action or summary of an upcoming release and is usually sent a few days to a few weeks in advance of an event or story release to allow the journalist time to plan to thoroughly cover the story, and perhaps to show up to an event in-person.

You should compile an organized folder of press deliverables to submit to press in

relation to investigations or actions following up on investigations. Examples could include:

1. Key findings document with links to relevant key photos/clips

2. B-roll video summarizing the investigation's findings with factual (not overly dramatic) captions identifying what each clip shows

3. Supply chain verification

4. Supportive professional opinions, such as a legal opinion from a lawyer about what animal cruelty laws are being violated at the facility based on reviewing your footage, or a veterinarian's analysis of the condition of animals

5. GPS tagged photos / address verification

6. Draft of campaign video if it's done

7. Press release if it's done

To increase security, this is only sent after a trusted journalist expresses interest following an initial pitch. (You can generally trust an unknown journalist if they work for a trusted outlet. Just make sure they actually work there. Usually having an email address from that news site is a good way to tell, e.g., firstname.lastname@washpost.com.)

With actions requiring confidentiality (e.g., a slaughterhouse occupation, mass open rescue, or disruption of a politician), there's a trade-off between security culture and media exposure that you have to consider. Think carefully about whom you notify about the action in advance, what information you provide, and when you provide it. If you think law enforcement is anticipating something and monitoring you, and that the potential increased media exposure to be gained by notifying press ahead of time isn't worthwhile, you may opt to not notify any media at all. But if you have a major national media source who may want to come along, you'd almost always want to try to be as helpful as possible.

Of course, individual situations will vary and have to be considered as such. It's rare that a journalist would break confidentiality after committing to it, but certainly not impossible. Maintaining confidentiality is the right thing to do ethically and helps them maintain a good reputation and strong relationships. That said, journalists who are hostile to your message, or who are unlikely to cover you in the future, have less motivation to maintain your trust and more motivation to get a juicy story right away. A good default is to try to loop in one particular journalist who is as sympathetic to our message as possible at outlets which could come in person. This is much safer than

giving a heads up to a general news email that goes to many people, which also has the downside of you not being able to hand-select a sympathetic writer.

Also consider the timing of details you offer, getting more specific as the date gets closer. For example, you may want to tell a journalist a general area where the action will be an hour prior to an action, and then reveal the specific location when you're a few minutes out.

Role Specific Information

An investigatory team requires a variety of functions and roles from its members. From driving, to photography, to leadership, not everything can be done by just one person. Some roles are simpler to learn than others, but all are necessary to the safety of the team and the success of the mission.

You may be assigned to a specific role for any number of reasons. Maybe you have previous experience with a certain skill set or maybe other roles have been filled for specific reasons. It's also possible that assignments were made at random. If you are uncomfortable with or unable to fill a certain role, let your team leadership know. Don't be in a rush to go inside a facility or fill a flashy role. An unwillingness to take less exciting or less comfortable roles is a red flag to team leadership that someone is not a team player and is in the project for the wrong reasons.

The following information is divided into sections based on roles. You may be assigned only specific reading by your team leadership, but it is good to read through all of it. A comprehensive understanding of the workings of different roles will help you support the team and fill in if needed. Read for understanding, as you will not have access to this information during the mission. Your team's safety and objectives rely on your careful execution of your role.

Overview of Standard Roles

Different investigatory circumstances will require variations in what roles you assign, how many of each role, and the specific responsibilities assigned to each role.

In general, an investigatory team requires 6 roles. Sometimes roles are duplicated so that multiple people have the same responsibilities, such as multiple videographers or lookouts, and sometimes one person fills multiple roles at the same time. Not every role is needed in every investigation.

1. A lookout is someone stationed in a specific place and tasked with watching for activity like workers or police who could pose a threat to the rest of the team, and then warning the team if necessary.

2. A driver is tasked with driving the team to and from an investigation. Sometimes the driver will park the vehicle and participate in the investigation by filling another role until the team returns to the vehicle, but the best practice is to keep a driver in the vehicle so that the team can be quickly picked up in alternative locations in an emergency. Leaving the driver stationed also serves to protect the vehicle from suspicious farmers or police.

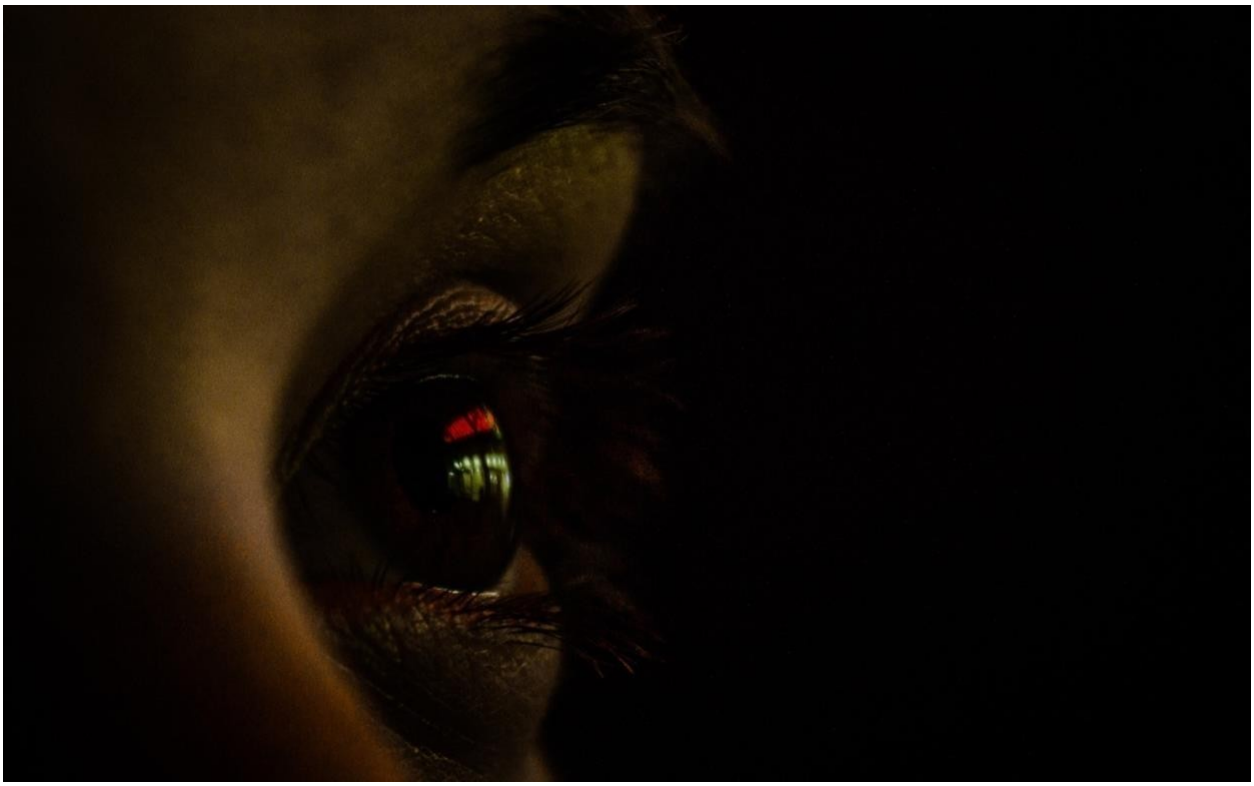
3. A camera operator takes photos or videos of key scenes during the investigation. An experienced and competent camera operator is crucial because photo or video content is often the main outcome from an investigation.

4. An “on camera” person is given the role of talking on video, sometimes reading a script, or other times just narrating what they see inside a facility.

5. An animal caregiver is responsible for animal care expertise in whatever respect is relevant to the investigatory plan. They may be responsible for identifying injuries for the on camera person to narrate and explain to the camera, choosing and handling the individual who can be rescued, or collecting samples of mucus, saliva, or feces, or dead animals, to be tested for disease.

6. A team lead is responsible for making key decisions in the field when time is of the essence or when there is disagreement amongst team members. Team leads are also generally responsible for navigation in the field, but this can be delegated to someone else. Team leads usually manage the planning and prep process and should feel a sense of responsibility for the safety of the entire team and the outcome of the investigation.

Lookout



A lookout is key to a safe mission. They are the eyes and ears of the team. While lookout is a good role for newer investigators, as it does not involve complicated equipment or in-depth training, it serves a crucial function, can be high stress, and requires independence.

Lookouts are placed in areas where they are relatively concealed but have a good field of view of "threat zones" where it is thought threats to the team may be spotted. You may be watching the door to an office building, a road that leads to the facility, or multiple different threat zones like these. Lookouts are often left by themselves for hours and required to stay vigilant, ready to alert the team at the first sign of danger. Many experienced investigators consider this to be the hardest job.

For team members inside a noisy, dark, windowless farm shed, a well-placed lookout is the only way to know when a threat is coming and they need to urgently escape.

Facility Geography

The first thing a lookout needs to understand is the layout of the facility, where they will be, and what they will be observing. In what kind of terrain will you be standing? Will any hills or obstacles be blocking your view? What are the functions and threat levels of the various buildings on site?

Understanding the context and basic workings of your surroundings will be key to distinguishing between a threat that must be urgently communicated to the team and something unthreatening like a car passing by the farm.

Your team lead will brief you on this information specific to the facility you are visiting, but it is your job to strive for optimum understanding and ask clarifying questions as needed. Once you are in position, feel free to ask for confirmation that you understand your surroundings by asking for cardinal directions, key landmarks or roads, or whatever clarification you need.

Threat Modeling

As a lookout, your job is to identify threats to the team so that they can be communicated. But what do these threats look like? Where are they most likely to come from? Understanding the model of threats your team leadership considers most likely will help you focus your energy and attention on the areas that constitute the highest risks. It will also help you decide what is and isn't a threat so that you can avoid false alarms.

Typically, there are a few buildings on a farm that are most likely to be occupied. Good planning can usually make sure that the team is operating as far away from these "threat radiuses" as possible, but it's still good to keep an eye on them in case someone emerges and heads towards the area of operation. It is usually not possible / preferred to check all these buildings for occupants, so you may be keeping an eye on a number of areas without knowing for sure if there are humans inside.

It is common for lights to be left on overnight in farm offices, but lights turning on or off is a sign of human activity. Ask your team leadership if they would like to be alerted in the case that you see this. There are many strange sounds you will hear on a farm in the middle of the night, from the often human-like cries of the animals to the clattering of machinery, to the automated kicking on and off of industrial fans. Ask your team lead what kind of noises to expect, and what kinds to consider threats.

Another common threat to look out for is any vehicle coming into the facility. Your team lead should brief you on what roads and entrances to watch, and at what point you can tell if a vehicle is coming onto the property. It's good to understand how busy the roads are around you, so you can get a sense of whether it is unusual to see cars coming from a certain direction.

Again, don't be afraid to ask for clarifications of the threat zones once you are in place. It is better to ask than to operate without important information that could jeopardize

your team's safety.

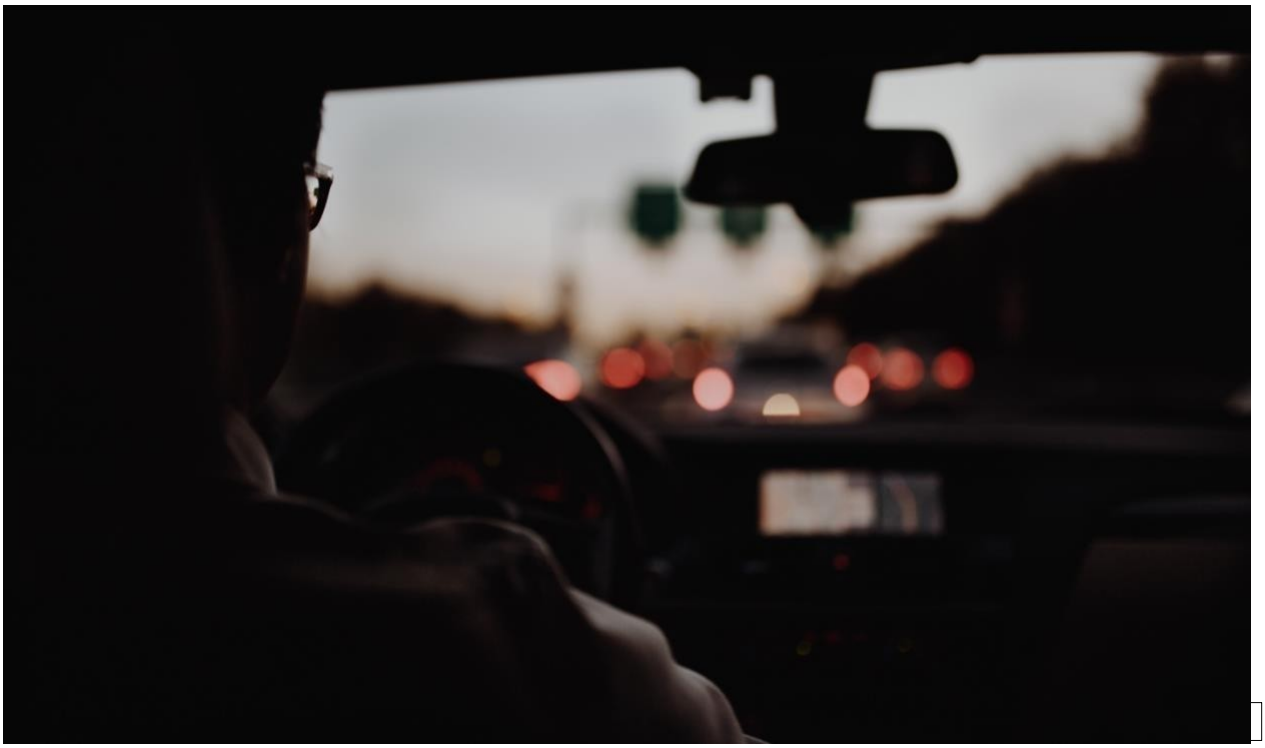
Communication

Once you understand your surroundings and how to identify threats, you need to understand how to communicate them to your team. Because the specifics of the technology you are using will vary from team to team, we will focus on general communication norms and best practices.

Both over-communication and under-communication can cause major problems in a high-risk situation, but it’s good to lean towards the over-communication side to be safe. Only communicate what you think is necessary information to the team, but if you are unsure of whether something is a threat, it’s good to let the team know. Keep in mind that in some cases you are the only connection the team has to the outside world, and seconds could mean the difference between being caught and getting away.

Often, the metal exterior of industrial farm buildings will block radio signals from far away, so if you are a lookout placed near the shed you may be asked to act as an intermediary between the inside team and farther off members. Listen carefully for messages from one to the other and restate them with the preface of who they are from and who they were intended for. You may also be given the task of handling all communications with the driver as the inside team is busy.

Driver



A driver is a crucial part of any investigation or rescue project. For members of a team who may be entering dangerous and unknown areas in the middle of the night, knowing they have a driver close by and ready to pick them up at the first sign of trouble gives them the reassurance they need.

Driving Expectations

As a driver during a high-risk project, it is important to prioritize safety and security. Follow all traffic laws to the letter, unless specifically instructed otherwise by your team lead. The last thing you want is to be pulled over in the middle of the night with a car full of black-clad, headlamped investigators and crates full of rescued animals.

There may be times where you do have to drive over the speed limit, pull a questionably legal U-turn, or drive onto ambiguously marked private property. Trust your team lead, but don't get fancy with maneuvers you feel unsure about.

Driving late into the night or all night can be exhausting. Never hesitate to ask to switch off with another team member or even pull over for a nap if you are getting too tired. Drowsy driving can be extremely dangerous.

Navigation

Navigating unfamiliar rural areas in the pitch black can be difficult. Make sure to ask your team lead what their plan is as far as using phones, maps, or GPS devices to navigate, and make sure that you have navigation equipment you are comfortable using left in the car with you when you drop off the rest of the team.

Drop Off

Often, the plan will involve you dropping off team members on the side of the road somewhere so they can quickly get to cover in the bushes, and you can continue to a predetermined parking spot. If this is the case, be prepared to have to park by yourself and await further instructions from your team. Make sure you understand exactly where you are supposed to drop them off, park, and pick them up, as well as contingencies for parking and pickup locations.

Parking

If your plan involves the driver dropping off and picking up the team, they will need to park while the team does their work. Look for a secluded parking spot nearby, ideally within radio range. If you think your area of operation is on high alert looking out for activists, consider driving further to park and going somewhere like a gas station or grocery store parking lot.

Alternatively, the plan will sometimes involve you parking the vehicle with your team,

and either leaving to enter the facility with them, or waiting in the car while they go in. This concept is much simpler for you but requires a specific facility layout and might bring unwanted attention to the drop-off point. If you are parking and leaving the car, make a plan for who will take the keys and be extra careful not to lose them by keeping them in a secure zipper pocket.

Be extra cautious when pulling over on the side of the road to ensure you are not parking in deep mud, sand, snow, ice, or a ditch. Many investigators have become stuck and had to resort to calling a tow truck.

Communications

As the driver, you will often be the most isolated member of the team. Ensure that you have a good plan for how to communicate, as well as multiple solid contingencies in case you lose communication. Ideally you will be within radio range of the team and able to communicate with them that way. You may hear lots of communication between them. Pay attention in case anything is relevant to you, but do not respond unless they are talking to you, or you have important information to relay.

Sometimes you will be located in an area where you can act as a secondary lookout, in which case the team may be relying on you to keep watch on a certain area. Take this task extremely seriously, as your heads up may make the difference between team members escaping or being caught.

Contingencies

As a more isolated member of the team, it is of particular importance that you have a good understanding of the plan, as well as what to do if something goes wrong. The most common, relevant issues are communications failure or a pickup location becoming unusable.

If you completely lose communication with the team, a good fallback is to drive past the designated pickup spot every 30 minutes, on the hour and half hour mark (2:00, 2:30, 3:00, 3:30, etc..). This way, even without communication, they will be able to flag you down to be picked up. Pass by with your cab lights on to let the team know what car is yours, and radio them as you drive by in case the comms failure was due to being out of range.

Make sure everyone knows your backup location in case the pickup location is unusable because the area has become busy or police are on scene.

Know Your Rights

As a driver, you are in the peculiar position of being the most likely to have to interact with police and members of the public but having the lowest risk if you do come in

contact with them. As always when interacting with law enforcement, general security rules apply. Never give any information about the nature of what you or others are doing and avoid lying. Unlike other situations however, you can often get out of these interactions easily if you act calmly and un-suspiciously. In most cases, if police approach you, you were probably pulled over on the side of the road waiting for your team. You can generally just tell them that you were on your way home and got tired, so you pulled over to rest, but now you feel better, and you will head out. Only if they become aggressive or are asking specific questions should you refuse to answer, but even then, it is recommended to be polite and just tell them your lawyer friend told you not to answer those kinds of questions.

Camera Operator

Video and photos help us capture the reality that animals experience every day in farms and slaughterhouses. Often, an investigatory videographer or photographer is the only chance an individual in a farm has of their story being told to the world. It is crucial that we capture media in a way that will be usable and compelling.

Equipment

Capturing quality video and photographic evidence is the primary objective of most investigations. Good lighting, sound, and camera equipment will have a huge impact on the quality of your footage. It makes sense to invest as much as you can in these three areas, but a lot can be done with just a smartphone and a flashlight.

We won't dive into specific details on equipment in this section because instructions can vary widely based on what you are using, but it is important to spend as much time as you can learning to use your camera. Practice recording video in a variety of situations, especially low light, high-stress situations like protests or vigils, and of nonhuman animals. If you regularly attend activism events, volunteer to take video for them.
On consumer DSLR and mirrorless cameras there are dozens of relevant settings to learn about, but you should start by learning about exposure. Exposure is controlled by three camera settings: shutter speed, ISO, and aperture, all of which have other effects on the image. If you learn about these settings, you will be well on your way to mastering videography.

If you don’t have time to learn all these specifics, most modern cameras offer an “auto” setting that will adjust them for you.

Framing

Framing your shot is essential to capturing the important aspects of the story in an interesting and clear way.

Especially in stressful and overwhelming situations, people tend to just press record and try to film everything they see in one continuous shot. This makes it very hard for video editors to get a steady shot of a single interesting scene because the camera is moving too quickly. Instead, it is recommended to take your time, assess the situation, and figure out what is interesting to film. Choose a specific scene you want to capture, and then figure out what angle is best. Film that scene a few times, holding your camera as steadily as you can (camera movements like panning and zooming can look really cool, but they are not recommended for new videographers) for 10-20 seconds. 20 seconds feels like a lifetime in a factory farm, but this duration seems to be most useful for video editors. After you have gotten a few shots of that scene, move on to the next one.

Ask your team lead in advance for a shot list, or even better, an outline of the video they hope to make, and try to figure out what kind of shots will help to tell the story they want.

Background Story Shots

1. Gear being prepared
2. Investigators entering / exiting vehicles
3. Investigators walking in darkness
4. Investigators putting on biosecurity gear
5. Investigators entering barns
6. Investigators walking through barns
7. Investigators filming / using flashlights
8. Investigators explaining what they are seeing
9. Investigators interacting with animals
10. Animals being rescued

Key Investigatory Shots

1. Violations of the law (lack of food and water, mutilations, etc.)
2. Injured animals
3. Animals unable to move / get up
4. Individuals expressing strong emotions (sadness, fear, etc.)
5. Animals interacting (fighting, cuddling, protecting one another, etc.)

6. Medications, food, antibiotics
7. Charts with dates, illness / mortality rates
8. Paperwork
9. Signage that lists the farm name, company, policies, etc.
10. Filthy conditions
11. Deceased animals
12. Body parts
13. Dumpsters
14. Wide shots to show scale
15. Animals resisting / trying to escape

NEVER deceptively frame a shot by moving animals or interfering with the situation to make it seem more interesting.

Lighting

Lighting in an investigation is one of the most difficult parts, but it can completely change the look of your video.

The first thing to keep in mind with lighting is team safety. You don't want to raise alarms or give away your position by casting unnecessary light in directions it might be noticed. Think about where you are, the material of the walls, windows, etc. and where the threats around you might be located. Always avoid using light outside at night, as it can be visible from many miles away.

That being said, using lights can really improve the quality of your video because most cameras are unable to film well without enough light. The amount and kind of light you need will vary depending on your situation. For example, a pig farrowing barn will always be lit up at least somewhat at night, while an egg farm will usually not be.

Some basic rules of lighting are:

1. Check your lights to make sure they don't flicker on camera
2. Generally light from above, not from below your subject
3. Use the largest, widest light source to reduce hot spots in the image
4. Use the least amount of light possible, to keep unlit portions of the shot somewhat visible

Sound

Capturing quality sound is another difficult part of taking video in a factory farm. Plan ahead and figure out how important it is to capture good sound. If you are attempting to record a narration or scripted speaking inside a farm, it will take specific equipment and planning.

A shotgun microphone is usually sufficient for capturing the sound of animals, as well as a line or two from investigators within a few feet, but if you need more than that, it is worth switching to a lavalier microphone. A traditional wired lav mic attached to your camera is not ideal in a crowded barn or a situation where you might need to escape quickly. A lav attached to a beltpack internal recorder is good, but a wireless lav system that sends audio to the camera is ideal. The Rode Wireless Go system is standard for many investigators.

Test your lav set up in a noisy area at home, ideally with the correct person talking. Even have them try on a tyvek suit and the clothing they plan to wear so you can nail down the right place to put it. It is good to know, for example, that Tyvek and winter jackets make a lot of noise. It is worth bringing a pair of headphones to actively monitor your audio and make sure nothing has gone wrong.

On Camera Person

In many investigations and rescues, one or more people will be chosen to be on camera to tell the story of the situation and speak in any videos that will be produced. This is an exciting role, as not everyone gets to be public about the investigatory work they do, but it also carries increased risks.

Expectations

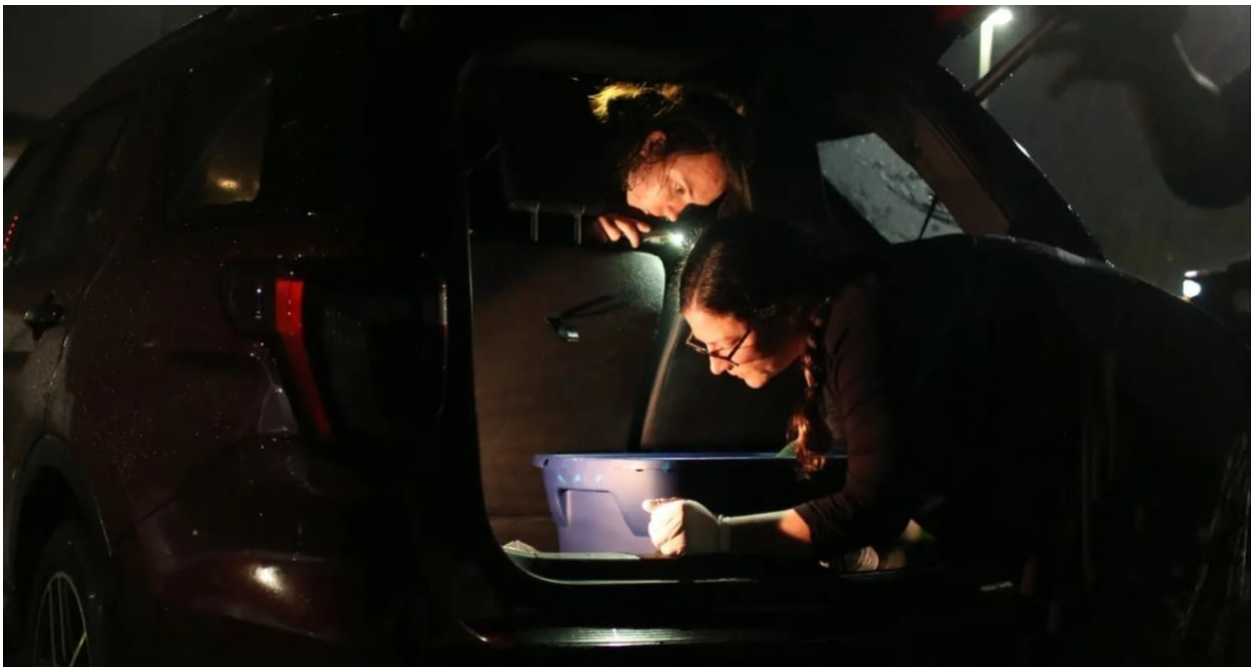
There are a number of specific expectations for a designated “on camera person.” First of all, listen carefully to your directions, study and memorize any talking points that are given to you, and be ready to modify them as instructed. If you need to deliver specific lines, even if you try to memorize them, it can be hard to remember them in a stressful situation so you can bring them written on paper, but make sure to keep them out of the shot when filming.

Just because a video is published showing you in the investigation doesn't mean you can share anything you want about the investigation. Ask your team and team lead what kind of information is okay for you to post or share with your friends and what to keep confidential. A good rule of thumb is to never talk about the actions of anyone other than yourself.

Legal Risks

The risk of legal repercussions increases significantly when you are featured in a video. Historically, when DxE activists have been charged for investigations and open rescues, it has almost always been the people that are shown in the videos. Take this risk seriously, and only accept this role if you are comfortable with the worst-case scenario.

Animal Caregiver



Having an investigator who is trained in animal care or familiar with specific behavior can be crucial to the success of an open rescue. Ensuring someone on your team knows how to properly hold or handle the specific species is of the utmost importance. Not only can an animal be injured if they aren't handled properly, but there is also the risk that you drop the animal when leaving the facility. If this happens and you are not able to catch them, it is almost certainly a death sentence because farmed animals are domesticated and cannot survive in the wild on their own.

Identifying Illness / Injuries

When identifying a candidate for rescue, or just conducting an investigation, it is very useful to have some specific knowledge about the most common ailments among the species in question. The best way to learn about a particular species is to spend time caring for them under the guidance of an experienced veterinarian or sanctuary operator, but this is not always an option. Most relevant information for common species can be found with a quick internet search, but make sure you are using reliable sources.

Animal Handling

It is highly recommended that at least one member of a team have experience handling individuals of the relevant species, as mistakes in this area can be extremely problematic. The general baseline when handling anyone in a high stress situation is to be calm but very firm. Always keep wings held down or a tight grip on any area of the individual's body they may use to wiggle out of your arms. It can be very useful to carry a towel or small blanket to wrap them up. If you have any question about your ability to restrain an animal who is trying to escape your arms, tell your team lead to find someone else to carry them. Also note that if the individual is a larger pig or a calf, who can weigh over 80 pounds, it is vital that the rescuer be able to handle that weight for the walk to the rescue vehicle, wherever it may be.

Transportation

Transporting nonhuman animals can be a stressful and dangerous endeavor. One of the most important factors to control is body temperature. Especially for young individuals, being too hot or too cold can quickly lead to disaster. For small animals, it is recommended to have a carrier set up in your vehicle with soft bedding, food, and water. Consider taking some of the feed from the farm so that the animal can eat what they are used to for a while. For large animals, it is highly advised to talk to an experienced vet about the safest way to transport them.

Testing and Sampling

As the animal care expert, you may also be asked to handle the collection of samples of feces, nasal or saliva swabs, feed, environmental items like bedding, or even the dead bodies of animals. The exact protocol will vary depending on what you are collecting and what you are looking for, but in general it is best to find a lab as close as possible who can handle that lab work for you. While sometimes possible, lab work done by activists might be seen as less credible.

Generally, make sure you are using purpose made containers or swabs for your samples, and call ahead to your lab to confirm how the samples should be stored and transported. Film the process of collecting to show where you found each sample and that you avoided cross contamination. Number each sample and show them in the video.

If you find dead bodies during your investigation, a necropsy by a vet could provide insight into how they were treated and how they died. Necropsies often attempt to determine cause of death and test for a wide range of diseases.

If your team decides to collect dead bodies, it is good to prepare in advance by bringing

extra plastic bags, gloves, disinfectant, and other supplies. Determine where you want to take the bodies and figure out how they should be stored and transported. Vets often want bodies frozen or on ice, but extreme cold may kill some of the diseases for which you would like to test. Always treat the dead bodies of animals with respect and care.

If you are sending samples or bodies to a vet or lab, do some research to see if that vet or lab is associated with the farm you are investigating or the industry in general. Make a plan for where you will say you found the bodies or samples and assume they will be suspicious. Many investigators have been reported by vets. Also consider how they may react if they find dangerous diseases. As an example, if you take a sample from a bird farm to a vet in California, and they find Newcastle disease, they may be obligated to follow up and try to figure out where it came from. If you are evasive, they may come to your home and attempt to kill any birds living with you.

Team Lead

In an investigatory team, it is recommended to always appoint a team lead. Although horizontal organizing models offer many benefits in some circumstances, it is crucial to have an experienced decision maker with the ability to make quick calls in life-or-death situations. This leadership position must be earned through trust, hard work, and good conduct, not enforced by artificial hierarchy or authority. As a leader, it is your obligation to take your mission seriously, to lead by example, to constantly improve, and to always prioritize the safety of your team, as their lives may literally be in your hands.

Values to Exemplify

Lead by Serving

- As a leader, think of yourself as being in a position of increased service and accountability, not increased privilege or importance
- Reinforce the importance of all roles by doing the grunt work whenever possible
- Delegate tasks to empower and develop skills in others, not out of laziness, and take an active role in passing on skills
- In general, earn your place as a leader by taking the opinions of others seriously, striving for true consensus in decision making, and deferring to the majority opinion of the team whenever possible
- Embrace sacrifice by taking the worst spot to sleep, cleaning up after others, eating last, etc.

Build Purposeful Community

- Think of your team as a community, and prioritize healthy relationships between team members
- Take an active role in conflict resolution when safe to do so, and remind the team of your purpose if conflict is flaring up at a dangerous time
- Give critical feedback privately so as to not embarrass team members, and praise successes publicly amongst the team to reinforce wins
- Protect your team from abuse, and make it clear that an investigation is no place for flirtation or sexual activity
- Protect your team from “downers, slackers, and jerks” as these three kinds of team members have been shown to significantly reduce a team’s effectiveness
- Take time to emotionally debrief with your team, especially as they will not be able to vent to their loved ones due to security culture

Do Your Homework

- Always be on the lookout for new evidence, techniques, and technology that can assist your work
- Go above and beyond in research about facilities and equipment
- Take interest in every part of your team’s work, and strive to have a basic understanding of each role from videographer to lookout
- Become a resource about industry standards and practices through thorough research

Aim to Do Exceptional Work

- Take your mission seriously, and consider the life-or-death consequences of the decisions you make
- Do every task to the best of your ability
- Always take feedback graciously, and actively ask for feedback from your team and others
- Take personal responsibility for the mistakes of your team, and make it

your job to ensure they never happen again
- Set clear goals and expectations for your team, and do your best to determine what went wrong if you do not meet them
- Thoroughly debrief each aspect of every investigation; learn from the experiences of each of your team members, and take accountability for improving the next mission

Be Fiercely Nonviolent

- Inspire your team by your willingness to sacrifice to protect them, and to make change
- Have empathy for the individuals caught up in the system you are fighting against
- Take time to process the brutality of what you witness
- Never engage in or allow violent rhetoric, even if it's a joke, especially during an investigation

Equipment

As technology advances, there are many tools that can serve as a major asset to investigators, from camera gear to power tools. Investigations can be a very technical undertaking, and as a team lead, it is your job to both understand the basics of the equipment your team deploys, and to ensure that specific designated team members are proficient enough to use them well. Not everyone needs to know how to do everything, but a good team lead should strive to be a jack of all trades and be able to supervise or take over any aspect of a project.

Handheld Cameras

Handheld cameras are the primary tool for capturing video and photos in an investigation. There are many types of handheld cameras to choose from, expensive cinema cameras, mid-range DSLRs and mirrorless cameras, and inexpensive "point and shoot" cameras. Generally modern mirrorless cameras strike the best balance between cost, modularity, quality, and portability. The recommendations made below will consist of Sony mirrorless cameras because they have become the gold standard.

Recommendations

There are many amazing cameras available today, and you can easily spend thousands of dollars on camera equipment. Start with inexpensive gear and work your way up if you find the need for new capabilities. Do not become overwhelmed with technical specifications or feel like you need the highest quality camera to capture your investigation.

Budget: Sony ZV-E10
An inexpensive APS-C camera capable of 4k/30 video, 25MP photos, and decent low light performance. Requires E-mount APS-C lenses and Sony W series batteries.

Higher Quality: Sony A7 IV
A mid-tier full frame camera capable of 4k/60 video, 33MP photos, and great low light performance. Requires E-mount full frame lenses and Sony NPF-Z100 batteries.

Prime Lenses

Prime lenses, which do not zoom and only operate at a "fixed focal length," can be very beneficial for investigations due to their lightweight and great low light performance.

For Sony APS-C: Sigma 16mm f1.4, Sigma 30mm f1.4

For Sony Full Frame: Sony 20mm f1.8, Sony 35mm f1.4

Mid-Range Zooms

Mid-range zoom lenses offer the most flexibility and, at the cost of added weight and bulk, allow easy transitions from a wide field of view to a zoomed-in shot. Because of their higher "f-stop," zoom lenses typically do not perform quite as well in low light.

For Sony APS-C: Tamron 17-70 f2.8

For Sony Full Frame: Sigma 24-70mm f2.8

Super-Telephoto Zooms

Super-telephoto zoom lenses are typically used for bird and "wildlife" photography but can be invaluable for surveillance of facilities from far away, like photographing animals on a farm from a public road. They are very specialized though and are only useful in very specific situations.

For Sony APS-C: Sony 70-350mm f4.5-6

For Sony Full Frame: Sony 200-600mm f5.6-6.3

Lights

Farms and slaughterhouses are often pitch black at night, and it is important to use a light source capable of providing enough light to capture video, but not so much that it draws attention to you.

The Aputure MC is a small but bright, internal battery, rechargeable LED panel. It features full RGBW color, Bluetooth control, and it can be adjusted between 0-100% brightness easily.

This is especially useful as a background light as it is small and magnetic for attaching to the environment.

The Aputure AL-F7 is a larger LED panel with a removable, rechargeable battery, designed as an on-camera light for news gathering. This light is extremely bright and can easily illuminate an entire barn but can also be adjusted down to 0% so you can control the output.

This is especially useful when mounted to your handheld camera as it will illuminate whatever you are filming.

Microphones

Good audio quality is important for storytelling, and in an unpredictable environment full of screaming animals, it can be very difficult.

The Deity V-Mic D4 Duo is an inexpensive, on-camera microphone that will do a good job of capturing environmental sounds, like animals in distress. It also features a second, rear-facing microphone capsule, so it is perfect for recording a live voice-over / explanation of what is being seen on camera. Shotgun mics like the D4 Duo will never be ideal for recording dialogue from someone in front of the camera when in a noisy environment, but if the person stands close and talks loudly, it will be good enough.

The Rode Wireless Go II is a set including 2 tiny Bluetooth microphones for mounting on a speaker and a receiver to input the audio directly into your camera. A setup like this is perfect for capturing dialogue as someone walks around a noisy environment like a farm.

Stabilizers

Stability is one of the biggest priorities for capturing usable video footage, and it can be difficult to achieve in stressful and unpredictable environments. Depending on the internal stabilization offered by your camera and lens, it might be worth looking into using a device to stabilize your camera.

An inexpensive photography tripod will be perfect for stationary shots, but they are bulky, and most shots will require some amount of movement as the camera follows a subject.

The iFootage Cobra 2 is a monopod with many uses for investigation. Monopods offer the most flexible camera stabilization because they are easy to pick up and move. They can be used to elevate a camera high in the air, pan and tilt, or even be used while walking. Monopods also offer other benefits during investigations; they can be used as walking sticks for balance, to reach out and check for obstacles in the dark, to elevate radios for increased range, etc.

A gimbal like the DJI RS3 Mini offers even more stability, especially when walking or running with a camera, at the cost of weight, complication, and speed of set up.

Recommended Educational Standards

Videography and photography are extremely complicated and technical arts, and decades can be spent mastering them. There are however some basic educational standards that you should ensure some member of your team meets. Ideally as the team lead you should understand these as well to ensure you are able to assist when needed and make sure things are being done properly.

Three settings, ISO, Aperture, and Shutter speed, are what control the "exposure" of an image, how bright it is in other words. But each of these three settings also have other ramifications on image quality. ISO can lead to image imperfections or "noise," Shutter Speed affects motion blur, and Aperture affects "depth of field" or how the background goes out of focus.

There are hundreds of informative videos on these topics, and they are easy to understand after one spends a couple hours or so learning.

Cleaning and Maintenance

Cameras are delicate and expensive pieces of equipment that should be treated well so they will produce quality footage for as long as possible. Always transport camera equipment carefully, and pack it with sufficient padding if carrying it in a backpack or

suitcase.

Never leave a camera with an exposed sensor for longer than necessary between lens changes, and regularly check the sensor to see if it is dirty. A speck of dust on a sensor can leave noticeable marks on photos and video and ruin the footage. Keep a lens cap on your lenses as much as possible and protect the lens to keep from scratching it.

Clean and inspect your cameras and lenses thoroughly before and after investigations to make sure they are working properly. Investigations can lead to cameras becoming very dirty. Using an alcohol wipe, do your best to clean out any buttons and dials, behind the articulating screen and other moving parts, in the battery compartment, etc. For cleaning lenses and glass elements, use extreme care and the correct tools. If possible, bring your camera to a professional if the sensor needs to be cleaned.

Periodically, check for firmware updates for your camera and keep it up to date for best functionality.

Drones

Drones are a game-changing technology for investigators, and they are more accessible than ever. Investigators can now purchase a drone for less than $500 that will allow them to get shots of facilities and expose abuse in ways that were impossible just a decade ago. Not only are drones getting cheaper, but they are also getting

smarter and easier to use. While it can seem very intimidating to fly hundreds of dollars of camera equipment through the air, consumer drones are packed with sensors and do most of the work of flying for you. In 2023 there are few excuses for serious investigators not to have a drone and the ability to fly it confidently.

Recommendations

The market for consumer drones is moving incredibly quickly, with new drones being announced multiple times per year that have massive improvements in flight time, range, camera quality, and affordability. Any recommendations given here will almost certainly be out of date by the time you read this, so do your own research to see what might be available to best meet your needs.

The cheapest drone worth looking at currently is the DJI Mavic Mini 2. For less than $500 you can get a whole kit for the Mini 2 that includes 3 batteries, a controller, a case, and a charger. The Mavic Mini 2 records in 4k at up to 30fps, has a battery life of up to 31 minutes, and a stated controller range of up to 10km. Another huge benefit of the Mini 2 is the low weight. At only 249g, it skirts under most drone regulations, including Canada's restrictive licensing law, and the US's FAA registration mandate.

The DJI Mavic Air 2s is a fantastic, mid-range drone with the best all-around performance on the market. For $800 the Air 2 is the smartest DJI consumer drone, packed with smart features for vehicle and subject tracking, autonomous movements, and obstacle avoidance. The Mavic Air 2s films in 5.4k/30 and 4k/60fps, boasts a battery life of up to 34 minutes, and has a controller range of 10km.

Guidelines

Drones are useful in many investigatory contexts, from capturing footage of abuse, to scouting for an action. For the most part, there are a few rules that should always be followed when flying a drone for investigations.

1. Be safe.
    - Avoid flying directly over anyone, including nonhumans. (*Note:* This will not always be possible)
    - Stay far away from power lines.
    - Fly within visual line of sight whenever possible.
    - Stay above any potential obstacles.
    - Stay far away from other aircraft.

2. Check local laws about drones.
    - As drones are quickly gaining popularity around the world, governments are struggling to keep up with new regulations. As a result, drone laws vary significantly in different areas, and are changing frequently. Find an up-to-date

source for researching local laws, or ideally, talk to a lawyer with relevant expertise.

- When researching laws, pay special attention to the following topics:
- Requirements about registration, licensing, notice, or identification for drones or drone pilots
- Depending on your circumstances and use case, it may not be a big problem for you to register your drone, get licensed, or set up an identification beacon that sends out information about your drone, as some places require. For many investigators, it is worth looking into loopholes and work-arounds for these restrictions, like using a 249 gram drone to avoid hitting the weight limit that requires federal registration in the US. Others might even decide to ignore these rules outright. But at the very least, you should understand what your legal obligations are and what the impact of following or not following them could be.
- Regulations about where drones can or cannot be flown, like height restrictions, airspace restrictions, designated fly or no-fly zones, rules about flying in public parks, near airports or other sensitive airspace areas, or over private property
- Keep in mind that many of these laws might not have as much authority as they claim, especially as early laws are being rushed through legislatures. For example, in the US, it is common for states or localities to pass laws restricting drones over public parks, but many have been found to be preempted by federal regulations of airspace, and void as a result.
- Drone rules specifically pertaining to personal privacy, private property, or animal agriculture

3. When flying a drone over a facility, assume it will be seen.
    - Consider whether it is worth tipping the facility off to potential further actions.
    - If conducting on the ground investigation at a facility, be very careful about drone usage beforehand, and ideally save it for after.
    - Consider what you will do in the event the drone crashes or is taken down by the facility.
    - Try to keep the drone off of the property line to make it less clear what you are focusing on.

4. Avoid confrontation.
    - When possible, launch your drone from an area where you will not be seen, or where you will not stand out much.
    - Assume that farmers who see the drone and respond will be aggressive and possibly violent.
    - Have a plan for how to de-escalate if someone is suspicious of you. Have an escape plan if needed.

5. Consider the digital tracking on your drone.
   - Many consumer drones must be registered with local governments.
   - Many drones integrate tracking software which might be automatically sent to authorities.
   - Consider who could be held liable if you misuse your drone.

Recommended Educational Standards

1. It is recommended that anyone flying a drone for an investigation has at least a few hours of flight practice in various environments.
2. Drone operators should understand how to charge and set up the drone, as well as how to set up and troubleshoot camera / recording settings.

Hidden Cameras

While the majority of this manual focuses on in-person investigation done while avoiding contact with farm employees or security, there are many types of abuse that can only be documented while a facility is active, or over a longer term. For these situations, the ability to place and leave behind discreet camera systems is very useful. These camera systems come with some important considerations, like protecting the personal privacy of workers, legal risks in some jurisdictions, and technical complications, but they can enable investigatory findings that would otherwise be impossible.

Legal Considerations (not legal advice)

As with any element of an investigation, it is advised that you talk to a lawyer and/or conduct in-depth research about the laws in the relevant jurisdiction to see how they apply to your context.

Discrete recording is subject to widely varying regulations in different areas. Some regulations you may want to specifically research include:

- Privacy laws
- One party vs. two party recording consent laws
- “Ag gag” laws that specifically criminalize recording animal agriculture facilities
- Differences in restrictions around recording photo, video, and audio

Privacy Considerations

When planning to use hidden camera systems, it is very important to consider your goals, and how to avoid violating the personal privacy of individuals. It is highly encouraged that investigators only place cameras in areas where it is clear their goal is to monitor the treatment of animals, assess environmental damage, track patterns of vehicle movement, or accomplish other important investigatory objectives. Areas where there is interaction between humans and nonhuman animals or where pollutants are being discharged into the environment are places where anyone should expect their actions might be monitored to ensure they are in line with regulations and basic ethical standards. Cameras should not be placed in areas like break rooms or offices where people might be taking personal time, and there are no suspected violations happening.

If abuse is discovered and captured on camera, investigators should carefully consider how to release it while protecting the personal privacy of any workers involved. Often, when video of animal abuse is released, the public outrage becomes focused on individual workers who may have perpetrated or been involved in the abuse. A focus on individual “bad apples” lets the system of animal exploitation and the companies responsible escape accountability, while often leading to the firing of the worker(s), and a full exoneration for the company who trained and empowered them to act the way they did.

Blurring the faces of humans caught up in animal abuse situations, and clearly framing your investigatory findings to focus on the companies and systems causing these root issues, are good ways to protect the privacy of individuals.

Security Considerations

Another risk of placing hidden cameras is that the cameras might be found. This could lead to a variety of issues, from alerting the facility to your ongoing investigations, to the hardware or video footage being traced back to you.

If cameras are found, the worst case scenario is facility security lying in wait for you to return, essentially setting a trap. Any time you are returning to a facility where you have placed discreet cameras, take extra caution to enter slowly and have a good escape plan in case things go wrong.

If cameras are collected by security or law enforcement, consider what elements of them could be traced back to you. Is the first shot on the SD card your face as you turn the camera on? Was the camera or some serialized element of it purchased on your credit card?

Take special consideration of whether cameras being found is worth the risk if you have significant further plans for investigations or actions at the facility. The facility being tipped off and increasing security a week before a planned rescue could be a serious issue.

Camera Recommendations

When placing hidden cameras, there are a number of factors to weigh, which will be different in every facility / situation. There is no one-size-fits-all solution that will work for everyone. Additionally, recommending an exact set of procedures / devices could risk compromising current investigation methods, so this section outlines some general guidelines to follow in selecting equipment and developing your own processes.

Research some basic options for cameras and power systems that could meet your expected needs, so you can get a sense of the size and layout of the devices. There are many kinds of cameras that might work in different places. If the camera is being placed outside, you might be able to use a much larger traditional security camera or trail cam that has its own battery and solar panel system, and can be much easier to use. If you are placing it far away, you will need to make sure it has sufficient zoom. If you are placing it indoors and in close quarters, size constraints will be much tighter. “Spy” style cameras with a pinhole lens, a low light sensor, and a compact, low voltage DC powered body are great for these situations. There are many different brands and types available. These cameras can be hidden behind or inside various objects, with the camera lens poking out through a hole just a few millimeters wide.

Placement

First, assess your goals and parameters. What are you trying to film? What would the perfect footage look like in terms of angle, lighting, quality, footage type / duration (is it video, photo, time-lapse, audio, or some combination?) etc.

Then, consider what logistical support the camera will require. How long will it have to be in place? How much power will that require? How long will it have to record for? Could you use motion activated recording or some other setting to reduce media size? Will you need to be able to remotely monitor the camera?

Next, go to the location and assess the environment. Remembering the goals of where you want to film, and from what angle, where does that mean the camera should be? What does the area look like? Are the walls perfectly uniform and bare, or is there infrastructure all over the walls? Is there somewhere in in the environment with enough room to fit the device and batteries that you need? Is there power available for the camera, or will you need to power it with batteries? Is there enough space for all the batteries you need?

After you have assessed all these different factors, further research what equipment could meet your needs, and purchase it for testing. It is recommended to thoroughly test any equipment you plan on installing, to ensure it is safe and reliable. Do as much of the preparation as you can at home before entering the facility to save time. Keep your work area tidy, your tools close to you, and have a plan for leaving quickly throughout all the stages of installation in case someone enters the facility. Consider using hand tools instead of electric tools to reduce noise. If you are working around live electricity in the area, thoroughly research and implement safety precautions. Consider turning off power to the entire area if you can determine it is safe to do so.

Recording and Transmission

Once you have a plan for where your hidden camera will be placed, you need to decide how to record and transmit the data.

Consider the importance of the following recording settings, keeping in mind that different cameras will enable different options:

- Resolution / quality
  - Higher quality generally looks better, but takes up more storage space, and may use more energy
- Frame rate
  - Higher frame rate makes footage look smoother, but takes up more space
- Exposure
  - How is the brightness of the image controlled? Is the footage the correct brightness in the areas you are focusing on?
- Focus
  - Do you need to focus the lens manually? Is the depth of field large enough to capture everything you need to capture?
- IR vs visible
  - Recording in infrared allows better night vision, but might make the footage look strange
- Record type
  - Do you want pictures or video?
- Record frequency / duration
  - How long should clips be? If using a time lapse function, how often should images be captured?
- Record triggering
  - Should the camera record constantly, only when it detects motion, or in some other scenario?
  - Is the motion sensing reliable? Does it trigger too easily or not easily enough?
- Media storage settings
  - Is the footage all saved to a local SD card or drive? Is it uploaded to a server?
  - Is locally stored footage encrypted or secured somehow?

    - What happens when the storage gets full? Does it roll over the oldest footage, or stop recording?
- Authentication
    - Can / should your footage contain a time / date stamp?
    - Does the camera have GPS and can it embed location information?
    - Is there another way you can ensure your footage will be trusted when you present it to the media or authorities?

Decide how important remote access is, based on your circumstances. In some cases, like leaving a camera well hidden in a barn for a couple days with the intent to collect it and review the footage, you may not need any way to remotely access the camera. In others, like where you are leaving a camera for multiple weeks or months and need to regularly check in, you may want the ability to log in and view the camera feed, just to check the status. In the most extreme scenarios, where you are unlikely to get the camera back, you may need to be able to download all the footage the camera records remotely.

Remote transmission is a complicated topic, and one of the areas where sharing specific advice could compromise current investigatory techniques. Generally, look into wifi or 4g cellular cameras, and consider what hotspots or other devices you might be able to use to get an internet connection to them.

Besides the downside of extra cost and intricacy, wireless signals on a discreet camera could add to the risk of it being found.

Power

If your camera needs to record continuously for more than a few hours, you will probably need to add some extra power on top of any battery that may have been included.

Read through the manual to your camera to learn the voltage input range, and assess the amount of power it takes to run over a 24 hour period, in order to decide how to power it. Generally, small cameras run on 5-12 volts DC, which enables a wide variety of power options.

Battery power is generally the best option for discreet cameras because access to an AC plug can be difficult, plugging something in might be suspicious, and available power might be unreliable. Lithium ion batteries are generally the most energy dense available, and can be purchased in voltages from 3.7 to 24. While custom-building batteries out of raw cells is the most cost and space efficient option, pre-built and enclosed batteries like those available from Talent Cell are very cost effective, safe, and easy to use. For constant recording times of a couple weeks or less, using battery power is very achievable, but will require a decent amount of space.

If you need to run the camera for more than a couple weeks of constant recording, it is worth trying to figure out AC power. Assess any easy options, like AC outlets in the area of the camera. If there are outlets, ensure they are active, and try to determine whether something being plugged in could raise suspicions. Also assess whether the outlet could be on a timer or switch, and not always active.

If no easy power outlet options are available, you could get creative with something like a light bulb power socket, but this might be more likely to be noticed. **Always use extreme caution around live or possibly live electricity.**

Even if you do use facility power, it's ideal to have a battery backup, so consider running a small UPS, or uninterruptible power supply, between the charger and the camera to keep it running in case you lose AC power.

As with all elements, make sure that any plugs, extension cords, or other visible items you use match the surroundings and don't stand out.

Night Vision and Thermal Imaging

Infrared night vision devices can be a huge asset for the safety and effectiveness of your team, allowing you to see clearly what would have been invisible before, and operate without using lights that could give your position away. However they also come with some serious downsides and a significant cost.

What Are Night Vision and Thermal Imaging?

Night vision and thermal imaging devices are tools for seeing more than the naked eye can see. Without getting too technical, night vision and thermal imaging systems both capture infrared light beyond the spectrum that our eyes, or normal cameras, are able to.

Night vision devices intensify and display that light in a way that ends up looking like a much brighter image, resulting in the ability to see an area that would otherwise have been too dark. Because they only intensify existing light, night vision devices would not enable you to see in a completely dark room, and might struggle on a moonless or cloudy night away from light sources. This issue can be remedied by using an external or built-in infrared light to add even more brightness to the area, without bringing attention to yourself by shining a light visible to the human eye. Traditional night vision works by using an analog device called an “intensifier tube,” which has been in use since the 1930s. While analog night vision is still considered the gold standard and used by militaries around the world, there is an expanding market of digital night vision devices, which are starting to come close in terms of performance and come with benefits like the ability to record pictures and video, and start at a much lower price.

Thermal imaging systems also capture infrared light, but are intended to display the differences in heat signature, or temperature, of different objects in a landscape. This results in an image, either in black and white or color, where objects that are particularly hot or cold in comparison to their surroundings stand out through brighter or darker coloring. There can be many benefits to this, but the main use case is quickly spotting recently active vehicles, humans, or other animals in a dark environment. Thermal imaging

is always done with a digital camera based system. Contrary to their portrayal in fictional media, thermal imaging cannot see through walls or any other surface. In fact, thermal cannot even see through glass! It just sees the temperature of the glass, wall, or other obstruction itself.

Use Cases and Recommendations

The uses for night vision and thermal imaging essentially break down into three categories: capturing photo / video for investigatory purposes, static observation or scanning an area for threats and obstacles, and active use to aid visibility as you move in a dark environment.

If your goal is to capture footage or photos in a dark environment, a simple and affordable, digital night vision camera like the Sionyx Aurora Sport, and external IR illuminator are probably all you need.

If what you want is a device you can pull out to scan an area before entering, or use to keep an eye out for movement in a general direction, this is where a thermal device like the Flir Scout TK really shines. With a mid-tier thermal monocular you can quickly spot the heat signatures of humans from 100+ meters away, in complete darkness. You can also quickly identify nonhuman animals who could pose a threat to your team, identify what buildings in an area are running heat or fans, determine if a vehicle is still hot from running recently (check the brakes for the most accurate assessment,) and much more. A thermal optic is great for a lookout, because it allows them to quickly identify if movement they see or hear is coming from a human or something else, and allows them to spot threats in darker areas or further away than they could with the naked eye. The biggest downside to thermal optics is the lack of detail and texture. If you're looking at an area, like the ground in front of you, which is all roughly the same temperature, you won't be able to see bumps, holes, or other terrain features that could be important.

A handheld digital night vision device like the Sionyx Aurora Sport could serve this need as well, but doesn't have the benefits of thermal. The ultimate type of optic for this scenario is a thermal infrared fusion device, like the AGM Fuzion TM35-384, which features both a digital night vision camera and thermal camera, and overlaps the images to provide the benefits of detail and of heat signatures. These fusion devices are relatively new to the market, so they come in at a relatively high price point, and they are pretty niche, so they aren't recommended for beginners or anyone who has not determined they have a particular need.

The final and most well-known use for these devices is as an active vision aid to increase your ability to see and move safely in a dark environment. For this use, it is pretty much essential for your device to be held in front of your eye(s) by being mounted on a helmet or head harness system. This results in active, hands-free night vision that, while clunky, allows you to move almost like you would in a well-lit environment. Because of the limitations discussed in the previous paragraph, thermal optics are not ideal for this use. Instead, you want a night vision system that minimizes size and weight, includes appropriate mounting options, and is relatively durable so it isn't destroyed when you inevitably whack it on something. Theoretically, an affordable digital night vision device like the Sionyx Aurora could be used for this, but it is very bulky, doesn't have a great mounting system, and because of the limited frame rate on the camera, it lags and doesn't

work well for looking around quickly. The best option for this use case would be something like a PVS-14 analog monocular, as this is considered the gold standard by militaries and other professionals around the world. It might also be worth looking at the newer Sionyx Opsin, a digital night vision system designed for this exact use, that also takes pictures and video.

If you are using any type of night vision, it is worth picking up a couple inexpensive infrared lights to add brightness.

Guidelines for Use

Night vision devices allow significantly increased visibility in low light, but they are not perfect for all situations.

Some night vision devices such as the PVS-14 monoculars can be mounted to a helmet or head harness and worn while walking. This is great for moving safely in the dark without needing to visibly light your path. Other devices like the Sionyx Aurora cameras are not well suited for this.

If using a mounted device while moving, consider keeping one eye free to maintain your natural night vision adjustment.

Be aware of where you are, and your visibility. Sometimes using a night vision device can make you feel invisible, like you can see everything, but no one can see you. Often, you will unintentionally walk into a well-lit area and not realize you are so visible.

Be aware of the light splash from the device back onto your face. A night vision device essentially amplifies and converts infrared light into visible light, and if you are not holding it close enough to your eye you might be lighting up your whole face. Light like this can be visible from long distances in some circumstances.

Be aware that even if your IR flashlights are not visible to the human eye, they may be spotted by cameras or other people using night vision. Night vision is becoming more and more popular among US hunters, and especially those who hunt wild pigs and coyotes. It is not uncommon for hunters to be hanging out in farm areas with night vision scopes or monoculars, waiting to catch animals off guard. Security cameras also often record the IR spectrum.

Related to the last point, another use for infrared night vision devices is looking for security cameras. Many cameras emit IR illumination at night so that they can capture bright images without being seen by the naked eye. Scan the perimeter of the facility with and without your night vision device to see if there is IR light being shined.

Burner Phones

A burner phone is a regular cell phone that has been acquired and used in a way that reduces the likelihood of it being associated with you. Avoid using smart phones whenever possible, but, when necessary, a burner phone can reduce risk.

Materials

1. Faraday bag
2. Charger
3. Phone
4. Sim card

Risks

Many of us are aware that we are tracked and surveilled through our cell phones, but most people don't understand the exact process through which this happens. Disclaimer: There is no 100% effective way to keep a phone from being tied to your identity, but following best practices will help reduce the risk significantly.

Content interception / surveillance happens when your messages, internet searches, etc. are intercepted by tech companies or the government. See the cyber security section for more information about this.

Cell tower triangulation is a method through which cell companies and government agencies can track the approximate location of your phone by watching what cell towers it connects to. Signal triangulation can be done months or years later by a court order due to information hoarding by tech companies.

Identification of a cell phone can be done a number of ways. The most common is just checking who bought the phone. If you buy a phone with your debit card and use your real name, it will be very easy to tie to you. Alternatively, identification can be accomplished by tracking the location of a phone in relation to other devices, seeing what Wi-Fi networks it connects to and where it spends time. If a phone spends every night at your house, and then is transported right next to your main identified phone every day, it is very easy to see who owns the phone.

Risk Mitigation

If a cell phone is necessary for your investigatory work, there are a few ways to avoid these risks, but no solution is 100% effective.

1. **Purchase / set up**
    a. When purchasing a burner phone, do so in a random or far away location you don't regularly visit. Don't use the corner store right next to your house.
    b. Do not bring your real phone with you so it will not be tracked to the location.
    c. Purchase your phone with cash and purchase a prepaid plan that will work with it.
    d. Do not use any of your real information when purchasing or setting up the phone.
    e. When setting up the phone, create a new email using the same phone in order to activate it.
    f. Use the store Wi-Fi to set it up if possible.
    g. Make sure full disk encryption is enabled in settings, and choose a long password, not biometrics, to lock the phone.
    h. Download any apps you will need: offline maps, signal messenger, etc.
    i. Turn off the phone or place it in a faraday bag, which will keep cell signals from reaching the phone, before bringing it to another location.

2. **Segregation**
    a. Never turn your burner phone on or take it out of the faraday bag at your house, work, or in the presence of other phones directly or indirectly tied to you or other activists.
    b. Ideally, only turn your burner phone on near the location of your

investigation.

c. Do not import any contacts or use the burner phone to call or text friends or family. Ideally, only use Signal to contact other burner phones prepared the same way.

3. **Disposal**
    a. It is best to dispose of burner phones after a few uses. As wasteful as it is to dispose of perfectly good electronics, there is no safe use for a cell phone once it has been used for an investigation.
    b. Best practice is to wipe them of all data, turn them off, and dispose of them in a public waste area far from your home.
        i. Disposing of electronics with a battery is dangerous because it could cause a fire in a trash compactor. Consider removing the battery or destroying it yourself in a safe manner.

Radios

Handheld radios or "walkie talkies" are the go-to communication devices for investigations for a number of important reasons. Push-to-talk communication relays messages instantly, almost hands free, with no need to answer a phone or read a text message. Radios do not rely on cell coverage, which is often unreliable in rural areas. And finally, while it can be intercepted, radio communications in rural areas are usually not monitored like calls and text messages on a cell phone, and most handheld radios cannot be tracked easily.

Radio Basics

- How do radios work?
  - While most people are familiar with the idea of communicating with radios, or have used "walkie talkies," most do not understand how they work. This manual will not go into detail about the science of radios, but we do need to explain a couple basic things.
  - Overly simplified, radios work by encoding information onto a radio wave and transmitting that encoded wave through an antenna. The radio wave then travels through space, and is received by another antenna, which allows another radio to decode that information.
  - Most handheld radios operate successfully within "line of sight," meaning if the radios / antennas can see each other, a transmission will be successful. However, a number of factors impact this process, from settings and options on the radio that change the power you are transmitting with to environmental factors like distance or obstacles between radios. If we want to choose the right radio and make it work well in our environment, we need to understand these

factors.

- Frequency bands
  - Different radios enable you to use radio waves of different wave lengths, or frequencies. These different frequencies act differently in the environment.
  - To keep things very simple, most radios either use frequencies in the VHF (very high frequency) or UHF (ultra high frequency) bands. UHF wave lengths are shorter than VHF, and the frequencies are higher.
  - UHF transmissions are better at penetrating obstacles like walls or trees, while VHF transmissions are better at slightly wrapping around obstacles, like short hills. No radio can transmit through very dense obstacles like mountains, the ground, or extremely thick walls.
  - The general advice given is that VHF is better for outdoors, and gets better range, while UHF is better if you have to go in or around buildings.
  - UHF is recommended for most investigators, as investigations generally require working in or around structures like barns, but it might be worth experimenting with VHF in different scenarios, like an open facility without buildings, or where you need particularly long range.
- Digital vs analog modes
  - Digital and analog modes are different ways of encoding information into a radio transmission. Like frequency bands, the modes you can use will depend on what radio you get.
  - Analog modes encode sound, like a voice, directly onto the wave, using various modulation standards. Analog radio is very simple and has been the standard for decades, so it is very reliable, but it does not enable many features beyond basic audio transmission. There are some ways to increase the privacy of analog radio, but none that couldn't be decoded in real time by software available for free online. Most handheld radios available to consumers will only be capable of analog transmission and reception.
  - Digital radios encode data into the transmission, so for voice comms, they first transform a recording of sound into data. Digital is generally considered to have better audio quality, and to maintain quality at slightly longer distances, but instead of becoming static-y and hard to interpret like analog, digital completely drops off when slightly out of range. Some digital modes are also capable of transmitting other data, like text messages, location data, or even pictures. Digital modes also open the door to encryption, which can range from very simple and easy to crack, to very secure. These complications come with downsides though, primarily cost and difficulty programming.
  - There are many different digital radio standards, which are not necessarily compatible with each other. The most popular digital modes for non-hobby use are DMR and P25. DMR is by far the most popular in commercial radios, and is available on radios across the price spectrum. P25 was designed for law enforcement and first responders, and is available to the public in new and used first responder radios. Make sure you do your research before choosing a digital radio standard.

Key Features

There are hundreds of radios on the market to choose fro and no one perfect radio to recommend for every situation. When choosing a radio, the marketing materials and reviews can be very overwhelming. Most radios available today are aimed at ham radio enthusiasts with very different priorities and operating parameters than investigators.

Consider the following features and their importance in your context:

- Durability
  - Is it able to withstand exposure to water?
  - Is it durable enough to be knocked around or dropped?
  - Is the headset or audio jack a locking type that won't easily be knocked out of place?
  - Is the belt clip or other mounting system secure enough for active use?
- User interface / programming
  - Does it have lots of buttons that might be easily pressed, leading to issues in the field, especially for inexperienced users?
  - Does it have the ability to program or change key settings in the field on the radio itself (front panel programmability), or does it require a computer and special programming cable?
  - How easy is it to program?
    - Do you have someone on your team with computer skills willing to invest significant time and endure inevitable frustration to program and keep your radios operating correctly?
  - Is programming software even available to consumers, or does it require programming at a licensed distributor?
- Privacy
  - Is it compatible with encryption?
  - Is it compatible with voice scrambling, digital voice or other low level privacy features?
  - Does it transmit potentially dangerous metadata like unit location or radio name?
- Commercial availability
  - Where can you buy it?
  - How quickly can you replace a radio if it breaks?
  - Are key accessories like headsets available?
- Stealth
  - Does it have settings to silence necessary alerts and tones?
  - Does it have settings to turn off unnecessary lights?
  - Is it a subdued color that will not stand out?
- Frequency
  - Is it compatible with a wide range of frequencies, or are you locked into a narrow range?
  - Is the frequency range right for your use case?
  - Do you understand the authorization that might be required to use the frequency range?

Radio Communications Security

Radios can be a huge asset to investigators and solve some security issues, but they also come with some security risks.

With most analog radios, every transmission you make can be heard by anyone within range who happens to be listening to the right frequency on a $15 radio. Things become even scarier when you think about someone running a radio scanner, quickly moving through the entire available frequency range, ready to narrow in on and listen to your

conversations.

Luckily, there are some time-tested principals, and some newer technology, we can use to prevent this.

First off, doing some basic research can prevent accidental overlaps that could cause someone to hear your transmissions. Check out a frequency database like radioreference.com to check for what frequencies are in use by local businesses and government. Make sure you turn off all analog “privacy tones,” which, despite their marketing, only prevent you from hearing other people on your frequency, not vice-versa. Spend some time listening on the frequencies you plan to use, in the area you plan to use them, and have a couple backups in case you start to hear traffic from someone else.

Consider implementing some basic emissions control and privacy guidelines, which can be used to prevent the wrong person from receiving your radio transmissions:

- Don’t transmit more than you need to, or for longer than you need to. Think before you transmit.
  - Do I need to communicate this?
  - Is there another way I could communicate this, like verbally in person?
  - What is the most efficient way I could communicate this?
  - How can I say this clearly, and transmit effectively, to reduce the chances of needing to repeat myself?
- Don’t use more power, or a larger / higher up antenna, than you need to achieve the range you have to hit
- When possible, consider using terrain features, like hills or dense forests that block signals, to your advantage, by placing blockages between you and populated or high-risk areas that you don’t want to receive your transmissions
- Use pre-agreed upon codes for common communications, locations, names, etc, to ensure that you can quickly communicate what would take much longer to explain out loud, and to reduce the chances that a third party hears a name or location that could cause problems

Consider using a radio with specific security features. While many radio features are commonly advertised as increasing security / privacy, there are really only 3 features commonly available in commercial radios that are worth investing in. Voice scrambling, digital modes, and digital encryption offer varying levels of security, and different levels might be sufficient in your scenario.

- Voice scrambling is a feature found in analog radios, which essentially jumbles up your voice transmission, so that another radio without the same setting will have a hard time understanding it. This scrambling can easily be decoded by someone motivated, but would likely keep a random stranger who happens to be listening to your frequency from understanding or becoming suspicious of your conversations.
- Digital modes, while not actually a security feature, offer a layer of privacy due to the fact that the vast majority of radios are analog, and will not be able to interpret the transmission. It is still possible someone could be listening on the same digital mode, or that they could record and decode it later. Digital features like text communication or burst transmission offer another benefit, which is a significantly reduced transmission time, giving someone else less time to notice you.
- Encryption is by far the most secure way of communicating. There are many types and levels of encryption, including hundreds of unique, brand-specific systems, and

some standardized types. Any level of encryption should add a significant barrier to anyone listening to your transmissions, but with sufficient resources, most encryption can be broken. AES 256 is considered the gold standard in radio encryption, and has no publicly known vulnerabilities. AES 256 encryption is becoming available on more and more devices, especially radios targeted at business use and first responders. Take note that encryption is not allowed on most radio frequencies, or with most radio licenses, but it is allowed on the business band. As with anything, do your own research and risk analysis.

Frequency Laws

Radio communications are heavily regulated in the US and around the world, but there are still pretty good options available with little or no licensing. FCC frequency laws are rarely enforced against individuals and groups using relatively low power handheld radios, and some investigators choose to disregard these laws, but you should do your own research and risk assessment.

1. **FRS**
    a) The Family Radio Service is a series of frequencies that can be used anywhere in the US with no license.
    b) All standard cheap walkie talkies you can buy at the hardware store use FRS.
    c) FRS radios are generally cheap, and the power is extremely restricted.
    d) These work okay as a cheap starter or emergency option, but are not reliable or long range.
    e) Encryption on FRS channels is illegal, and FRS radios do not offer encryption.
    f) FRS only includes 22 channels, and most FRS radios are very restricted on channels, increasing the likelihood of being overheard by someone using the same channel.

2. **GMRS**
    a) The General Mobile Radio Service is a series of frequencies that can be used anywhere in the US with a paid but no-test-required license.
    b) GMRS radios are more powerful, can use removable antennas, and can reach much longer range.
    c) GMRS radios are relatively inexpensive for the amount of power available.
    d) Encryption on GMRS channels is illegal, and GMRS radios usually do not offer encryption.
    e) GMRS includes 30 channels, and is less popular than FRS, meaning a reduced likelihood of being overheard by someone using the same channel.
    f) Be aware that increased range is a double-edged sword, in that people from further away might overhear you.

g) Licensing laws around GMRS are rarely enforced, and would be particularly hard to enforce against investigators who only operate in an area for a short period of time and then leave.
h) GMRS radios are legal to own and listen through with no license, and a license covers your entire direct family.

3. **Business Band (Itinerant)**
    a) Business Band Itinerant is a series of frequencies available to organizations and businesses, that can be used anywhere in the US with a paid, organization-wide license.
        i. This is beneficial because only one license allows as many users as you need.
        ii. Downside is that you need a business or nonprofit.
    b) Business Band allows very powerful radios that are reliable and long range.
    c) Business radios tend to be very durable as they are made for the professional market.
    d) Business radios range in price, but can be very expensive.
    e) Encryption is legal and mid- to high-priced business radios come with great encryption options
        i. This is a game-changer. With AES 256-bit encryption the police could be right next to you, listening to your channel, and there is no publicly known way for them to crack your encryption to understand your transmissions.
        ii. *Still use good security culture when communicating.
    f) Encryption defeats most issues about overlapping with other users, and itinerant frequencies are designed to have enough channels that users will not interfere with each other.

Recommendations

Radios can be expensive, but high-quality, reliable communication is one of the most important aspects of a safe investigation. Consider spending as much as you reasonably can.

1. The **Retevis RT29** is a durable, water-resistant, entry-level radio with a locking headset port and sleek, minimal controls. It is single band, available in either VHF or UHF, and features basic voice scrambling. Programming is extremely simple, and might not even be required in some cases. Accessory availability is somewhat limited.
    a. Costs can fluctuate significantly, but as of 2023 the RT29 is available for as low as $40.

    b. The RT29 is a great radio for beginner or advanced users who don't want to spend much and don't need advanced features like encryption or text messaging.
2. The **Ailunce HD1** is a mid-tier radio that features a similar body and the same headset port as the RT29, but is compatible with some more advanced features. It is a dual band VHF and UHF radio. It is compatible with DMR digital voice, text messaging, and GPS location services, and includes basic (weak) encryption. The advanced controls (an LED screen and keypad) are a double-edged sword, because they are necessary for some of the advanced features, but add more room for failure, either through user error or damage. Programming is much more complicated, and will require significant time investment to get right and make the features worth it. Like the RT29, accessory availability is somewhat limited.
    a. Costs can fluctuate significantly, but as of 2023 the HD1 is available for around $180.
    b. The Ailunce HD1 is a great radio for teams that have more experience, want more advanced features, have the time and tech skills to make the features work for them, and are still on a tight budget.
3. The **Hytera PD7xx** is a series of professional grade, ultra reliable and durable radios compatible with advanced features like AES-256 bit encryption, DMR digital services, significant public documentation, and a wide array of accessories available. The series includes 3 basic models with different types of controls, ranging from the sleek "featureless" PD702 to the PD782 with a full screen and keypad. The PD7xx series are all single band, available in either VHF or UHF.
    a. Costs can fluctuate significantly, but as of 2023 the PD7xx series radios start at around $350. They can however be found used or open-box on sites like Ebay for as little as $100, and are generally durable enough to trust secondhand. For these radios, some features cost extra to turn on, with the advanced encryption upgrade costing around $200.
    b. The Hytera PD7xx series are professional grade radios that are much more reliable than the other suggestions listed, and are the easiest way to access AES-256 encryption. They are more expensive, and similar to the HD1, will require much more complicated setup to make the advanced features work.

Accessories / Upgrades

1. Headsets
    a. The most important accessories for your radios are good earpieces / headsets. You don't want loud radio communication drawing attention to your position unexpectedly.
    b. A good headset should be loud and clear, durable, have an easy-to-use push to talk button, and not obstruct your hearing and general

awareness.

c. Try out an “open ear” style ear tip, which offers a good balance between allowing environmental noise in, and keeping the radio audio from being heard by others around you.
d. Consider bringing an extra headset into the field, as they are the most common failure point, which could lead to a team member losing communication, jamming everyone else’s communication through a “hot mic,” or even getting someone caught by their radio suddenly emitting loud sound from the main speaker.

2. Batteries and Chargers
    a. Most handheld radios have removable, rechargeable batteries, making it possible to change them out when they die or become damaged. Considering buying extra batteries for your radios, and possibly even carrying an extra in the field with you.
        - As with any device, a radio’s battery will eventually fail or become unusable due to battery wear.
        - Even without extensive use, batteries are a relatively common failure point on radios, either through damage or a manufacturing flaw.
    b. Most handheld radios require a bulky “dock” style charger. Consider investing in a multi-radio charger if you are consistently needing to charge many radios / batteries at the same time.
3. Antennas
    a. An upgraded antenna is the best way to improve radio performance in most conditions. Getting your antenna as high up as possible, and getting an antenna better tuned to your frequency range, will increase both transmission and reception.
    b. For handheld field operations, a much larger antenna probably isn’t worth the bulk it adds to the radio, but could be good to have in a backpack in case you need to reach a longer transmission distance at some point.
    c. For vehicle based use, a magnetic mount antenna placed on the top of the vehicle will dramatically increase range and reception, through the higher placement of the antenna, the option to use a much larger antenna, and as a result of getting the antenna outside the metal cage of the vehicle, which impedes radio waves.
    d. With any antenna, ensure it is tuned to the proper frequency range, and that the connector is right for your radio.
4. Mounting options
    a. While the way you carry your radio may seem like a trivial point, it can be an important factor in the effectiveness of the communication, as well as your ease of movement.
    b. The main points to consider in how to carry your radio are
        - Antenna placement for transmission / reception
            - Should be as high up as possible
            - Should be blocked by your body / bag as little as possible
        - Access to key controls
            - You should be able to hit your push to talk and access the

mic quickly and easily in strange positions, wearing gloves or thick clothing, while running, and under stress
        - You should be able to change the channel, volume, or turn off the radio easily
    - Comfort, ease of movement, and security
        - You should be able to run, lie down flat, take on and off bags, jackets, and biosecurity gear, climb over and through fences, crawl through bushes, and handle other extreme activities without knocking your radio loose, getting a cable snagged, or having any controls changed
    - Stealth / camouflage
        - If you are seen, your radio should not give you away, either by being hidden, or by blending in to your disguise

c. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for radio mounting, but generally a radio should be mounted on your body (not in a bag or backpack you might take off), on your front or side to reduce conflict with bags, under a layer of clothing to hide it and reduce snag hazards, and on or ideally above your belt line.
d. For many investigators, mounting their radio on their belt is the best solution for this. If mounting your radio on your belt, ensure the belt is sturdy and wide enough to hold the radio firmly, and that the clip strongly attaches. Test the security by running, climbing, crawling, and bumping it on things. Ideally, place a sturdy layer of clothing like a jacket on top of the radio, and run your headset underneath to reduce snagging.
e. The purpose built solution for radio mounting is a chest pack or harness, which can keep the radio high on your body and out of the way of bags. It also fits well under clothing, has straps to manage cables and mount your push to talk / mic, and securely holds the radio.

Programming

There are lots of resources and videos online that will explain what you need to know to program your radios, and it is important that someone on your team understands how to program them.

When programming your radios, disable any lights or alert noises you are able to.

Developing a Set of Protocols for Using Radios with Your Team

1. How will you start and end communications to make sure you're not missing anything?
2. Are there any code words you want to use in emergencies?
3. What should a team member do with their radio if they are caught?
4. Are you okay using your real names over the radio?
5. Example protocols:
    a. End all communications with “over” to let the recipient know they received the full message and can begin responding

b. Address team members by code names or their role
c. Begin all communications with your name / code name and who you are addressing so they will know to respond, such as “Team lead, this is driver, I see you now, over.”
d. Respond with “copy” to confirm you heard a communication targeted at you
e. If caught, say “break break break” into your radio to let the team know, and then turn off and hide your radio so it will not be used to find your team
f. If a team member is caught, switch to a predetermined backup channel
    i. Related: PACE Planning Section

Recommended Educational Standards

All team members need to know how to work their radio, and how to troubleshoot if something goes wrong.

Depending on the radio, the most common issues happen when the radio is set to the wrong channel, turned off, or your headset has come unplugged.

Attire

The clothing you wear on an investigation can serve a number of purposes, protecting you from the elements, carrying equipment, camouflaging you in foliage or even disguising you as a worker or lost hiker. Poor clothing choices can lead to serious issues, from making yourself too visible, to making it difficult or impossible to run when needed.

Camouflage

An important function of your clothing is to make you blend into your environment. This can mean different things depending on your environment.

In a rural area where your goal is not to be spotted, it is best to wear dark, earth tone colors like brown and gray. It is often tempting for people to wear all black, or even military camouflage clothing, but these offer a few problems.

Black clothing stands out against most backgrounds, especially if a light is shining directly on you. Instead of black clothing, wear earth tones and they will blend in both in the dark and brightly lit areas.

Camouflage and black clothing both stand out and make you look suspicious if you are caught. It is much easier to play yourself off as a lost hiker if you are not wearing all black and a ski mask.

Another way to visually obscure yourself is by wearing loose clothing. The human eye is

trained to pick up the silhouette of other humans, and if you can disrupt the transition between your head and your shoulders with a hat or loose hood, it can do a lot to make you harder to spot. The issue with loose clothing is that it can make it hard to get over or under things, as the extra fabric gets caught.

Alternatively, if you think you are most likely going to be seen, pick a role and fill it to the best of your ability using your clothes. Are you a slaughterhouse worker? A lost hiker? A local resident looking for their dog?

Consider watching an area to see exactly what kind of uniforms are worn if you are going that route.

Always avoid reflective, neon, white, and bright colors unless you are using them very intentionally to fill a role.

Functionality

It's important to wear clothes that are easy to move in yet durable and able to withstand the environment. It's important to consider what your team will be physically doing when advising folks what to wear. Will you be climbing over tall fences, walking through tall grass or pokey weeds? Are rattle snakes or ticks something to consider? It's best to wear pants like thick jeans and knee-high boots that are comfortable enough that you can still move and get over or under fences in them, and that give you protection against ticks, snakes, or weeds with spikes.

It's also important to consider how warm you will be if you have to be outside for an extended period of time. Make sure your lookout has enough clothes on to be warm, as they will likely be standing still outside for a long time. Ensure other team members are dressed warm enough to be okay if you all have to hide for a few hours, but also that they won’t over-heat completing their main objectives, which might entail moving around in a heated barn, while wearing a hot tyvek suit on top of their other clothing.

Environmental Specifics

Dress according to the scenery. If you are doing an investigation in the snow, consider purchasing a camo snowsuit for your team. If you will be doing an investigation in regular forest type areas or farm orchards, you'll want to wear dark colors that blend in.

Think through any peculiarities about your environment, and plan for worst case scenarios.

Pockets

It may seem silly, but sufficiently large, organized, and well-sealed pockets are extremely important for investigation. Investigators have lost phones, memory cards with all the photos and videos, radios, tools, glasses, and even the keys to the car they are driving home. Some investigators have even dropped their ID, leading to criminal charges in one case.

Ideally, investigators should wear cargo pants with deep front and back pockets, and at least 2 zipper or Velcro sealable cargo pockets. IDs, cash, credit cards, and other important items that do not need to be accessed on the farm should all be kept in one pocket that should only be opened in emergency situations. It is easy to pull an extra card out when you reach into a pocket for your phone on the run. In general, the items kept in your clothing pockets should be kept to a minimum, but a few other frequently used items like a flashlight, multitool, emergency kit, and cell phone can be good. Keep items segregated by pocket as much as possible, so that nothing extra comes out when you reach in. Test your pockets by loading them the way you like and then running, jumping, climbing, crawling, falling, and doing other activities.

If you don’t have enough pockets, a fanny pack can serve a similar purpose. Make sure to follow the same rules about segregating essential items in their own pocket. Ensure that the material will not rip open, and that it won’t snag or fall off when climbing or crawling.

Emergency Supplies

Whether you are dealing with a medical emergency or hiding in the woods for a few hours waiting for police to leave an area, there will be times when you want a few extra supplies to keep you safe and comfortable. It is good to think about the worst case scenarios in any mission and see each investigation as a potential survival situation where you could need to keep your team warm, hidden, hydrated, and safe for an extended period of time.

Shelter / Camouflage

There are a number of reasons you might need to hunker down in one place for an extended period of time. Maybe a teammate is injured or lost, and you are awaiting help. Maybe your driver was arrested, or the pickup location got too busy, and you have to wait a long time to be picked up. In these scenarios, having extra shelter to keep your team warm in the cold, out of the sun in the heat, or hidden in an exposed area, is crucial.

The first layer of shelter is your clothing. Make sure to wear clothes that are suitable for

the environment, and that will keep you somewhat camouflaged.

Another piece of gear that will add a lot in an emergency is a double sided reflective / camo tarp. A great option is the Arcturus Heavy Duty Survival Blanket. This tarp will keep you dry in the rain, reflect heat towards you in the cold, reflect heat away from you in the sun, or camouflage your team / equipment if necessary.

Consider bringing a couple short pieces of cordage and or ground stakes if you think you are especially likely to need your tarp.

Communication

Communication is vital in an investigation, and when communication is lost, things become very difficult. Communication loss is most problematic between parties who are far away and need to coordinate, primarily the driver and the rest of the team. The biggest solution to communication failure is a robust set of backup plans, but there is some equipment that also might come in handy.

If your team is using night vision, consider providing the driver with an IR strobe or even just some IR chem lights. That way, the team can identify their vehicle from far away without other passersby noticing anything.

Consider bringing a normal cell phone turned off and in a faraday bag, to call for help in an emergency. Having your phone opens up a world of options, from calling for a taxi / rideshare, to calling a friend, a tow truck, or an ambulance.

Miscellaneous

Think about your context, and imagine how you would deal with various situations. There are many other small items you might want to consider bringing, such as:

- Caffeine pills
- Water
- Electrolyte drink mixes
- Duct tape
- Cash money
- Credit card
- Rope
- Hand, body, toe warmers
- Toilet paper
- Extra dry socks
- Emergency blankets
- Etc.

Environmental Specifics

Think carefully about your environment and what specific emergency scenarios you might have to deal with. Flash floods? Lightning storms? Moose attacks? There is no exhaustive list that can prepare you for every situation. You have to analyze your context.

Vehicles

Vehicles are a necessary part of most investigations. Whether they are just dropping you off down the road or carrying your team up to the door of a facility, vehicles are the piece of equipment most likely to be noticed, photographed, and interacted with by law enforcement or suspicious members of the public. Many teams may have limited access to vehicles and may only have a couple possible options to choose from. Others may have a larger budget or network and may have more options. Regardless of what vehicle you choose, there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of your vehicle breaking down, drawing attention, or causing other issues.

Vehicle Type

When choosing a vehicle, there are many factors to consider. First, consider the type of terrain you will be driving, and the amount of payload you need to carry. How many members of your team need to ride at the same time? How many bags, large tools or rescued animals do you need to carry? Can your equipment ride in a separated truck bed or do you need it with the passengers?

Larger vehicles like SUVs, trucks, and minivans will almost always be preferred for their ability to carry lots of passengers and equipment. Vehicles with “4-wheel drive” or “all-wheel drive” are always preferred because of their ability to drive on rough or low traction terrain.

Consider what kind of vehicles are common in your area of operation. Full-sized pickup trucks or SUVs are usually very common in rural agricultural areas of the US, while minivans and smaller vehicles might be more common in urban areas. Consider the likelihood of your driver being spotted and confronted and what kind of cover story their vehicle affords them, e.g., a Prius does not lend itself to a story about midnight off-roading.

Finally, consider the color, details, and styling of your vehicle. White is a very common color for work trucks in rural areas, but it stands out in the darkness (unless it is snowing). Avoid bright recognizable colors. As with clothing, dark, matte earth tones will usually blend into physical surroundings best. While large SUVs might generally fit into a rural area, a fancy black escalade might make you look more like a fed than a farmer and bring unwanted attention. Consider details like bumper stickers and remove all unnecessary identifying information. Consider the license plate. What state is listed? California plates will draw attention in a rural area across the country.

NEVER use a vehicle that has animal rights or progressive ideology stickers or messaging.

Rental Vehicles

Rental vehicles have a number of benefits for investigations but are often too expensive. Renting a vehicle may allow you to choose a type or color better suited to your mission than your own personal vehicle. Renting a vehicle may allow layers of separation between your mission and your identity, especially if you can get someone else to rent it. Rental vehicles are often better maintained and newer than personal vehicles you may have access to, and you may be able to swap them out if you run into any problems. Rental vehicles can sometimes be swapped out even without a good reason if you think you were noticed by security and want a new vehicle.

Research whether the brand you are dealing with installs trackers in their vehicles and their privacy policy for dealing with law enforcement.

Lighting

Vehicle lighting is one of the most important and easily overlooked aspects of vehicle selection and use in investigations. The most important thing is that the driver understands how internal and external lights work, when they will turn on, how to turn them off, and when the team wants them on and off.

Internal lights like overhead dome, dashboard, and door lighting are useful conveniences in daily life, but in an investigation, they can be a dangerous liability that tells people miles away that a door has opened and people are exiting in a weird place. Test internal lights to see if they will turn on in a variety of situations. Try opening the doors when the car is turned on, turned off, when the headlights are on and off, and when the lighting is in different modes. Identify any problematic internal lights and either tape over them or remove the bulbs. A headlamp can usually meet your internal lighting requirements just fine.

External lighting can be harder to deal with, and even more problematic in some situations. First off, get a feel for how your external lighting like headlights, taillights, reverse, and brake lights work and what control you have over them. Are the headlights purely automatic or is it possible to drive at night with them off? Are there daytime running lights that you can't turn off? Do your reverse lights always turn on or only when your headlights are on? Next, think about your driving, drop off, parking, and pickup plan. Consider when your external lighting may cause problems e.g., brake lights on a dark road adjacent to a farm might signal to workers that a vehicle is stopping nearby for a strange or unknown reason. On long, straight roads it is often possible to see vehicles from many miles away, but whether they are moving or stopped might only be possible to tell from brake lights.

Consider whether your lighting will be sufficient for any off-road or technical driving that may be required. Consider the risk of fog or other weather conditions that may require special lighting considerations.

Consider whether the mission will require you to drive with your lights off or with minimal external lighting. How well can you see with your headlights turned off? Is it even possible to turn your lights off? Can you consider auxiliary lighting just bright enough for slow driving, but dim enough not to give away your position? Do you have night vision, and can you employ IR lighting?

Vehicle Safety / Recovery

Vehicle problems during an investigation can be a huge issue. Getting stuck in the mud, being pulled over for a faulty taillight, flat tires and dead batteries all put you at risk of mission failure or worse. Luckily, most vehicle issues are preventable with preemptive checkups and maintenance. Reference the vehicle safety checklist before every mission

to ensure your vehicle is squared away and will not cause any issues.

Make sure you have a plan for dealing with any likely vehicle issues. Does someone on your team have AAA? Do you have a friend nearby who can come pick you up if something goes wrong? Do you have a repair / recovery kit and experience using it?

Having a few basic tools like a tire plug kit, air compressor, jack, jumpstart battery, spare head and taillight bulbs, tow strap, and shovel can get you out of most situations. If you plan on driving off road or on rough terrain, other tools like traction boards, a winch, tree straps, a spare tire, high lift jack etc. might be helpful. Whatever equipment you carry, make sure you understand how to use it.

Checklists

Full Planning Checklist (1/8)

- [ ] **Decide on a narrative**
  - [ ] Decide if you're focusing on a specific company or farm
  - [ ] Decide if you're telling the story of a specific animal
  - [ ] Decide if you're following a specific investigator and name them publicly
  - [ ] Decide what kind of conditions or violations you are looking for

- [ ] **Decide on a facility**
  - [ ] Decide on a facility or a few you are interested in
  - [ ] Verify and document the supply chain and any other relevant facts

- [ ] **Build a team**
  - [ ] Create roles list
    - [ ] How many people do you need?
    - [ ] What specific skills are required?
  - [ ] Propose timeline and requirements
    - [ ] When must team members be available and for how long?
    - [ ] What level of risk should they prepare for?
    - [ ] Do team members need to travel?
    - [ ] Are there other requirements or circumstances you need to vet team for?
  - [ ] Develop a list of possible team members
    - [ ] Before reaching out, make a list of people who could be good team members
    - [ ] Consider:
      - [ ] Are they reliable?
      - [ ] Are they willing to take risks?
      - [ ] Are they physically capable of the role they are being given?
      - [ ] Are they good team players?
      - [ ] Do you trust them?
  - [ ] Make an initial ask of your top picks
    - [ ] Include as little information as possible
      - [ ] Are they interested in a high risk project?
      - [ ] Are they available during the timeframe?
    - [ ] Don't ask everyone at once, you don't want to have more people than you need and to have to turn people away
  - [ ] Confirm team member availability
  - [ ] Vet team members for security
    - [ ] See vetting section

- [ ] Organize a meeting of all team members

[ ] Logistics and Prep

- [ ] Housing
  - [ ] Consider whether housing is needed based on the distance to your facility or whether you are spending multiple days / nights
  - [ ] Ensure every team member has a comfortable place to sleep
    - [ ] Ensure no one is sleeping in the same bed / room together who would not be comfortable doing so in other circumstances, and give people their own beds whenever possible
  - [ ] Ensure the location is close enough to drive to and from in an evening but far enough away to not raise suspicion
  - [ ] Think about whether you will be noticed coming and going in the middle of the night
  - [ ] Make sure you have access to laundry to sanitize gear
- [ ] Transportation
  - [ ] Consider whether your team needs to fly to get to your location
    - [ ] Think about flying into an airport a couple hours away or even in a different state, air travel is heavily monitored
  - [ ] Consider renting a vehicle to add layers of obscurity
  - [ ] Make sure the vehicle you are going to use has current registration and insurance
  - [ ] Find a licensed driver
  - [ ] Make sure the vehicle is suitable for the weather / terrain
  - [ ] Consider whether the vehicle fits in with other vehicles in the area
    - [ ] Full-sized pickup trucks blend in well in rural areas, while a minivan might be better in a city
  - [ ] Make sure the vehicle has enough room for all passengers and equipment, including rescued animals
- [ ] Make a plan for what you will eat on each day
  - [ ] Buy food to make a few meals and have some snacks
  - [ ] Consider energy drinks and coffee to keep your team alert late at night
  - [ ] Consider what essential personal items the team might have forgotten
  - [ ] If possible, consider one nice meal out for the team (usually at the end of the trip), to show appreciation to the team
- [ ] Make a full outline of expected spending
  - [ ] Travel
  - [ ] Gas
  - [ ] Housing
  - [ ] Food

- [ ] Equipment

[ ] Mission Planning

- [ ] Create a map of the facility
  - [ ] Property lines
  - [ ] Threat areas
  - [ ] Key areas of interest
  - [ ] Public roads
  - [ ] Obstacles
  - [ ] Drop off locations
- [ ] Create backup plans for when things go wrong
  - [ ] Pick up locations
  - [ ] Ways in
  - [ ] Areas to focus on
- [ ] Scout to confirm plans
  - [ ] Communication
  - [ ] Confirm the location is occupied
  - [ ] Look for obstacles you didn't notice
  - [ ] Confirm drop off / pick up locations make sense
  - [ ] Check cell reception/ radio range based on terrain
- [ ] Decide on team roles
  - [ ] Will you be the team lead or will someone else?
    - [ ] Make sure you have buy in from the team and take the consensus building process seriously
  - [ ] Who will be the driver?
    - [ ] Do you have backup drivers for multiple nights?
  - [ ] Who can be a lookout?
    - [ ] How many lookouts do you need?
  - [ ] Who will take photos and videos?
    - [ ] Are they experienced with the relevant cameras?
  - [ ] Do you need someone to talk to the camera or present your findings?
    - [ ] Who is experienced delivering lines under pressure?
    - [ ] This is a high risk role as the identity of this person will be more public
  - [ ] Do you have someone experienced with hand and power tools?
    - [ ] What obstacles might you have to overcome
  - [ ] Who will stay at home and act as jail support
    - [ ] Make sure this person is very trustworthy

☐ Animal Care

- ☐ Decide on what level of illness / injury are you capable of caring for
- ☐ Create a plan for immediate care
  - ☐ How will you keep them warm while carrying them out of the facility
  - ☐ How will you respond to urgent injuries
  - ☐ How soon can you get them to food and water
- ☐ Book a vet visit for as soon as possible after the rescue
- ☐ Confirm long term sanctuary care
  - ☐ Confirm what level of care the sanctuary is able to provide
  - ☐ Confirm the sanctuary is a safe place run by trusted people
  - ☐ Confirm the level of support the sanctuary expects from you

Briefing Checklist (2/8)

- [ ] **Purpose**
  - [ ] Goals
  - [ ] Why the mission is important
- [ ] **Plan summary**
  - [ ] Target location
  - [ ] Leaving time
  - [ ] Arrival time
  - [ ] Mandatory leave time
  - [ ] Return time
- [ ] **Roles**
- [ ] **Plan walkthrough using satellite map**
  - [ ] Drop off locations
    - [ ] Backups
  - [ ] Parking
    - [ ] Backups
  - [ ] Walking route
    - [ ] Terrain
    - [ ] Distance
  - [ ] Target buildings
  - [ ] Potential risk areas
  - [ ] Lookout placement
  - [ ] Emergency meeting locations
  - [ ] Pickup location
- [ ] **Risks**
  - [ ] Legal
    - [ ] Know your rights refresher
  - [ ] Physical
    - [ ] De-escalation / evasion refresher
    - [ ] Emergency procedures
- [ ] **Tasks for the rest of the night**
  - [ ] What needs to be done before leaving?

Final Prep Checklist (3/8)

- [ ] **Team**
  - [ ] Team is briefed
  - [ ] Team members know their roles and responsibilities
  - [ ] Team members have showered and changed into clean clothes
  - [ ] Team members have all their personal gear with them (ID, $100+ cash, credit or debit card, etc.)
  - [ ] Team members have all personal belongings, especially identifiable ones like ID and credit cards, in well-sealed zipper or Velcro pockets where they will not fall out
  - [ ] Team members have key addresses and phone numbers written down or memorized
  - [ ] Team members are not accidentally bringing phones, jewelry, or any other unnecessary items
- [ ] **Gear**
  - [ ] Equipment has been sanitized
  - [ ] Equipment list has been checked
  - [ ] Equipment has been tested as relevant (batteries, etc.)
  - [ ] Equipment has been packed into the correct bag
  - [ ] Cameras have been tested
    - [ ] Settings are correct
    - [ ] Batteries are charged
    - [ ] SD cards are formatted (empty) and inserted
    - [ ] Sensors are clean
    - [ ] Microphone has been checked
    - [ ] Accessories are packed
  - [ ] Radios have been tested
    - [ ] Settings are correct
    - [ ] Channels are set and team knows what channels to use
    - [ ] Headsets are working
    - [ ] Batteries are charged
  - [ ] Burner phones have been tested at another location
    - [ ] Service is active if relevant
    - [ ] Batteries are charged
    - [ ] Maps are downloaded
    - [ ] Signal and other apps are downloaded and working
    - [ ] Relevant contacts are input
    - [ ] Relevant group chats are created and tested

☐ Vehicle

- ☐ Vehicle is cleaned and sanitized
- ☐ All unnecessary items have been removed (especially activism related items)
- ☐ Headlights / brake lights work
- ☐ Interior lighting is turned off even when the doors are opened
- ☐ Registration is active
- ☐ Tires are inflated
- ☐ Tank is full
  - ☐ Consider refill once you are closer to your destination
- ☐ All equipment is packed
- ☐ Driver knows where they are going and has a map and/ or written directions

☐ Support

- ☐ A jail support person knows what county you are in, the names and birth dates of your team members, and when you should check in
- ☐ All team members have a jail support phone number memorized or written down
- ☐ Team members know the location of your housing, how to get there, and how to get in if needed

Equipment Checklist (4/8)

The equipment used in an investigation will vary between teams and based on circumstances. It is recommended to create your own checklist for each mission based on the specific requirements. Use this list as a guide and think about what other kinds of equipment you could use to meet the needs represented by each category.

- [ ] **Communication**
  - [ ] Radios
    - [ ] Chargers
    - [ ] Headsets
    - [ ] Extra batteries
    - [ ] Extended antennas
  - [ ] Cell phones
    - [ ] Chargers
    - [ ] External batteries
    - [ ] Signal blocking "faraday" bags
    - [ ] Active SIM cards/ data plans
- [ ] **Navigation**
  - [ ] GPS navigation devices
  - [ ] Compass
  - [ ] Physical map of relevant areas
  - [ ] Written driving directions to and from the destination
- [ ] **Photo/ Video**
  - [ ] Handheld DSLR, Mirrorless, or Cinema camera
    - [ ] Batteries
    - [ ] Lenses of appropriate aperture and focal lengths
    - [ ] SD cards/ compatible media storage
    - [ ] Cages, rigging, accessories
  - [ ] Audio
    - [ ] On camera shotgun microphone
    - [ ] Batteries
    - [ ] Wireless or externally recording lavalier microphone
    - [ ] Batteries
    - [ ] Handheld "news reporter" style microphone
    - [ ] Batteries

- [ ] Lighting
  - [ ] On camera light panel
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Handheld light panels
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] High quality flashlights
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Headlamps
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Infra-red lights for night vision
  - [ ] Batteries
- [ ] Alternative / secondary cameras
  - [ ] Night vision cameras
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Micro SD cards
  - [ ] Action cams
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Micro SD cards
- [ ] Hidden cameras
  - [ ] Hidden camera modules
  - [ ] Batteries
  - [ ] Micro SD cards
  - [ ] Mounting/ camouflaging hardware
  - [ ] Remotes/ controllers
  - [ ] Viewing screen

[ ] Tools

- [ ] Screwdriver with various bits
  - [ ] Security bits
- [ ] Wire cutters/ tin snips
- [ ] Pliers
- [ ] Multitool
- [ ] Cordless Drill
  - [ ] Battery
  - [ ] Drill bits
  - [ ] Screws

- [ ] Cordless Dremel
    - [ ] Battery
    - [ ] Grinding wheels
- [ ] Tape
    - [ ] Duct tape
    - [ ] Gaffers tape
- [ ] Super glue
- [ ] Flexible wire
- [ ] Paracord
- [ ] Rubber or hard cloth floor mat for crossing barbed wire fences
- [ ] Step stool or ladder for crossing obstacles or climbing high objects

[ ] Biosecurity

- [ ] "Biosecurity Packs" in 1 gallon Ziplock bags
    - [ ] Tyvek coveralls
    - [ ] Gloves
    - [ ] Polypro boot covers
    - [ ] Sanitized T-shirt
    - [ ] Breathing mask
- [ ] Disinfectant (Bleach, alcohol, or hydrogen-peroxide based)
    - [ ] Spray
    - [ ] Wipes
    - [ ] Alcohol wipes for hands and equipment
- [ ] Extra boot covers and gloves
- [ ] Paper towels
- [ ] Brushes/ scrapers
- [ ] Heavy duty garbage/ contractor bags
- [ ] Duct tape
- [ ] Large seal-able plastic container

[ ] Emergency

- [ ] Hand warmers
- [ ] Mylar blanket
- [ ] Small, waterproof, camo tarp
- [ ] Paracord
- [ ] Duct tape
- [ ] Rain ponchos
- [ ] Trauma kit
    - [ ] CAT or SOFTT-W tourniquet
    - [ ] Quik Clot combat gauze
    - [ ] Pressure dressing
    - [ ] Compressed gauze

- [ ] SAM Splint
- [ ] Elastic bandage
- [ ] Safety shears

- [ ] General med kit
  - [ ] Pain killers
  - [ ] Antihistamine
  - [ ] Bandages
  - [ ] Specific personal medication (Insulin, epi-pen, etc.)

- [ ] Water
- [ ] Electrolyte drink

Footage Shot List (5/8)

☐ Prep Footage

- ☐ Research being done
- ☐ Gear being prepared
- ☐ Team talking, making plans, and briefing
- ☐ Looking over maps
- ☐ Practice and training
- ☐ Discussion about risks

☐ Investigation Team

- ☐ Driving to location
- ☐ Getting out of vehicle
- ☐ Walking to location
- ☐ Taking cover or hiding from threats
- ☐ Crossing fences
- ☐ Opening doors and entering buildings
- ☐ Using flashlights/ headlamps
- ☐ Lookout scanning the area
- ☐ Using radios
- ☐ Putting on biosecurity gear
- ☐ Using cameras
- ☐ Exploring facility
- ☐ On-camera person/people explaining what they are doing and speaking about what they see or reciting prewritten lines
- ☐ Diagnosing animal injuries/ illnesses
- ☐ Helping animals in distress
- ☐ Sharing a moment with individual animals, showing them compassion

☐ Animal Cruelty

- ☐ Crowding
- ☐ Confinement / cages
- ☐ Injuries like open wounds / apparent illnesses
- ☐ Focus on individual animals expressing emotions (Fear, sadness, aggression, curiosity, etc.)
- ☐ Animals interacting with each other
- ☐ Injured or sick animals unable to move
- ☐ Dead animals
- ☐ Lack of access to food or water
- ☐ Animals trapped in areas they aren't supposed to be in
- ☐ Criminal animal cruelty (consult animal cruelty laws in your area)

Points of Interest in the Facility

- [ ] Documents about supply chain
- [ ] Documents about animal health, age, mortality rates, medications, etc.
- [ ] Medications on site
- [ ] Tools for tail removal, debeaking, and other mutilation
- [ ] Electric prods, paddles, captive bolt guns, and other weapons
- [ ] Dumpsters full of animals
- [ ] Gas chambers
- [ ] Signage about animal cruelty, worker rights, etc.
- [ ] Obvious violations of biosecurity by the facility
- [ ] Filth, cobwebs, bugs, rats, or other wild animals inside the facility

Rescue

- [ ] Close ups of the individual to be rescued, before they are picked up
    - [ ] Where are they?
    - [ ] What injuries, illnesses might they have?
    - [ ] What struggle are they going through?
    - [ ] How are they being treated by the other animals?
    - [ ] How have they been treated by workers?
    - [ ] Can they access food and water?
- [ ] Stable shot of the individual being picked up
- [ ] Exiting the barn with the rescued individual
- [ ] Passing the individual over, under, or through fences
- [ ] Walking with them in the dark
- [ ] In the vehicle
- [ ] At the vet
    - [ ] Healing process
- [ ] Sanctuary
    - [ ] Experiencing grass / the outdoors for the first time
    - [ ] Meeting other animals

In Field Checklist (6/8)

☐ Drop Off

- ☐ Drive past the facility and look for unknown or unexpected activity
- ☐ What buildings have lights on?
- ☐ Are there cars in the lot?
- ☐ Are there vehicles moving?
- ☐ As you approach, check for cars within view in front or behind you
- ☐ Ensure all team members are ready to go and they have their equipment with them
- ☐ Ask each member if they are ready, and list all major items they should have (Example: “Tom, are you ready? Do you have your radio, your backpack, and the camera?”)
- ☐ Pull over and stop the car
- ☐ If possible, turn off all lights including cabin and running lights
- ☐ Promptly get out of the car and close the doors softly
- ☐ Car drives away
- ☐ Get off the road as quickly as possible
- ☐ Watch for ditches or obstacles when getting off the road
- ☐ If you need to get over a fence:
  - ☐ Help a capable team member go over first
  - ☐ Hand bags over
  - ☐ Go last
  - ☐ If a car approaches before you get over, lie down flat off the road and don’t move
- ☐ Get to good cover far from the road, somewhere traffic on the road cannot see you

☐ Traveling on Foot

- ☐ Now that you have found good cover, check the map and orient yourself and your team
  - ☐ Where is the road you came from?
  - ☐ Where is the facility you are heading towards?
  - ☐ Which way is north, south, east, west
- ☐ Check in on your team, make sure you have all your gear
- ☐ Check radio communication with your team and the driver
- ☐ Remind the driver to radio when they park
  - ☐ If no contact established, try your backup communication plan
  - ☐ In no contact with the backup plan, consider holding off until you can establish contact

- [ ] Start walking towards the facility.
    - [ ] Walk in a single file line, keep everyone close together at a comfortable and safe pace
    - [ ] Watch out for obstacles
- [ ] If walking through orchards or other foliage heavy environments, try keeping a hand out in front of your face to catch branches before they hit you
- [ ] Stay in the shadows as much as possible
- [ ] When crossing obstacles like ravines, fences, etc., take your time and help other team members first
    - [ ] After crossing, check to make sure you still have all your gear
- [ ] If you need to stop, do so in a safe place where you are not easily visible
- [ ] When walking in an area you could be spotted, have a plan of where you would run to or hide
- [ ] If you think you spot someone, stop and get down
    - [ ] Get multiple team member opinions if you are not sure whether you see someone
    - [ ] Be aware that your eyes will play tricks on you

[ ] Approaching the Facility

- [ ] As you get close to the facility, stop a good distance away behind cover
    - [ ] Spend a few minutes watching for movement or anything unexpected
    - [ ] Look for cameras, vehicles, weird lights, etc.
- [ ] Consider sending a couple people ahead and leaving others in cover to check if everything is safe
    - [ ] Look for cameras, listen for humans
- [ ] Before you approach, place your lookouts
    - [ ] Walk them to their position
    - [ ] Orient them and remind them where you are and where you came from
    - [ ] Explain where you are going
    - [ ] Explain the threat areas to watch, what to look for, and when to warn you
- [ ] Approach slowly and stay in the shadows
- [ ] Near buildings and threat areas, prioritize being as quiet as possible

[ ] Making Entry

- [ ] Check doors for obvious alarms or cameras
- [ ] Test doors to see if they are unlocked
- [ ] Put on biosecurity gear before entering
    - [ ] Leave everything unneeded outside with the lookout

- [ ] Immediately upon opening doors, listen for alarms and check the perimeter of the door for alarm contacts
- [ ] Enter slowly and carefully
- [ ] Close the door behind you but ensure you do not lock yourself in

[ ] Inside the Barn

- [ ] Once safely inside, remind your team the objectives and what you are looking for
    - [ ] Look through your shot list if you have one
- [ ] Make contact with lookouts and let them know you are inside and relying on them
    - [ ] Remind them of whether they are responsible for communicating with the driver, hourly check ins, or other tasks
- [ ] Move slowly throughout the barn, being careful not to step on animals if relevant
- [ ] Document in careful, intentional shots instead of filming everything in one long video
- [ ] Photograph all documentation you find
- [ ] Consider your context and capabilities when trying to help animals in distress
- [ ] If possible, give team members a few minutes to connect with individual animals and soak in their surroundings
- [ ] Check in with lookouts regularly
- [ ] When using lights, be careful that they are not shining through walls or windows and drawing attention from outside
- [ ] Before leaving, make sure everything is the way you found it
- [ ] Give your lookouts a warning and turn off all your lights before opening the door

[ ] Leaving the Barn

- [ ] As you step outside, be aware of your eyes adjustment to the light and consider having a lookout come over to help you
- [ ] Promptly remove all dirty biosecurity gear and seal it in a trash bag to pack out with you
- [ ] If relevant, move to the next barn and re-stage your lookouts if necessary

[ ] Leaving the facility

- [ ] Let your driver know how long it will take for you to get back to the pickup location
- [ ] Follow the same rules when walking back

Pickup

- [ ] As you approach the pickup location, keep a careful eye on traffic
- [ ] Get down any time you see cars coming, and take your time
- [ ] If the road has become unexpectedly busy, consider alternate pickup locations
- [ ] Establish constant contact with your driver, have them warn you when they are getting close, make sure you arrive at the road at the same time, and that no other cars are coming
- [ ] If another car is within eyesight when the driver gets close, have them keep going and turn around to try again as many times as you need to
- [ ] Consider asking your driver to turn the cabin lights on or flashing their high beams so you know when you see them
- [ ] After entering the vehicle, drive away and follow all traffic laws to avoid being pulled over
- [ ] Promptly pack up all suspicious items and equipment
- [ ] Head home!

Device Security Checklist (7/8)

- [ ] **All team member personal devices (computers, tablets, smartphones, etc.)**
  - [ ] Are encrypted
  - [ ] Are locked with a good password (not face or fingerprint)
  - [ ] Have lock-screen notifications turned off

- [ ] **All investigation-related conversations**
  - [ ] Are on signal
  - [ ] No one unnecessary is included
  - [ ] Disappearing messages are turned on
  - [ ] Chat names are inconspicuous
  - [ ] Chats are deleted when no longer relevant

Biosecurity Checklist (8/8)

☐ Materials

- ☐ Knee high plastic boot covers (for entering barns)
- ☐ Gloves (enough to switch between animals you may come in contact with)
- ☐ Disposable plastic coveralls (Microporous film Ex: Tyvek)
- ☐ N95 Masks
- ☐ Surgical face masks
- ☐ Disinfectant (Ex: Accelerated Peroxide)
- ☐ Brushes/boot scrapers
- ☐ Paper towels
- ☐ 2.5-3 mil trash bags (To separately store materials/items that are clean or dirty)
- ☐ Seal-able plastic container for contaminated valuables

☐ Directly before going into the field investigators must

- ☐ Shower thoroughly
- ☐ Put on freshly washed clothes
- ☐ Thoroughly disinfect all materials you are taking with you
- ☐ Scrub and disinfect footwear
- ☐ Disinfect vehicles on the interior, any areas you will touch, and the tires
- ☐ Place disinfected items in a clean bag immediately
- ☐ Wash hands with antibacterial soap
- ☐ Leave as soon as possible once materials are prepared and clothes are put on

☐ Directly before entering individual barns/sheds investigators must

- ☐ Put on fresh biosecurity suit
- ☐ Put on new boot covers
- ☐ Put on a face covering
- ☐ Put on gloves
- ☐ Leave any unnecessary items or materials outside inside a sealed bag
- ☐ Consider filming this process as evidence of your good biosecurity

☐ While inside barns/sheds investigators must

- ☐ Change gloves between touching different animals
- ☐ Be cautious to maintain your biosecurity gear
- ☐ Replace damaged or ripped coverings immediately

- [ ] Avoid exposing hard to clean items/ parts to the environment (Ex: Changing batteries in a camera)

[ ] Upon exiting individual barns/sheds investigators must

- [ ] Remove all disposable coverings (Gloves last!) and place them in a sealed “dirty bag”

[ ] When handling rescued animals

- [ ] Avoid skin contact, especially with mammals you think may have a skin infection
    - [ ] Once you have a rescue candidate secured, leave the facility promptly carefully and do not enter other barns/sheds if possible\
- [ ] Wear a breathing mask if you think someone has a respiratory infection

[ ] Before leaving the site

- [ ] Make sure dirty items are sealed in a bag

[ ] When entering your vehicle

- [ ] Have a clean, comfortable container to place anyone you may have rescued
- [ ] Have a sealable container to quickly place any valuable items you brought with you such as phones, cameras, headlamps, etc.

[ ] When arriving back home

- [ ] Pull out anything you need from dirty bag and dispose of everything else
- [ ] Clean out/disinfect car and place seat covers/mats in laundry bag
- [ ] Disinfect or quarantine all dirty equipment
- [ ] Seal away or wash dirty clothes, shower and change into clean clothes
- [ ] Avoid touching dirty items once you have showered and changed

[ ] Sanctuary protocol

- [ ] If possible, avoid visiting sanctuaries for a few days after visiting a farm
- [ ] When dropping off rescued animals, avoid contact with any other animals
- [ ] If entering areas with other animals, wear shoe covers