



# 41. Handling and slaughtering animals

Last update: 2025-06-03

## Overview

- Animals can carry and spread germs that cause diseases. These include livestock animals such as cattle, domestic poultry birds, and pigs, companion animals such as dogs and cats, household vectors such as rats, and wild animals such as bats and wild birds.
- All animals can carry germs in their bodies when they are alive and in their meat and offals when they are slaughtered for food. Animal by-products, such as milk or eggs, can also carry germs.
- Animals that have died (including foetuses that have been aborted or animals that died during birth) can also carry germs.
- To avoid spreading diseases, it is important to wear personal protective equipment and follow recommended hygiene practices when dealing with live or dead animals and their by-products.

## Diseases transmitted by animals

| Disease           | Animals   | Transmission  |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Rift Valley fever | Sheep, cattle, other animals. Signs and symptoms in infected animals: abortion; deaths in young.                                      | Transmitted by mosquito bites; droplets in the air; the blood of sick animals; the bodies of infected dead animals. |
| Avian influenza   | Wild and domestic poultry (birds). Signs and symptoms in infected animals: death or neurological signs; may have no signs of illness. | Transmitted through droplets in the air; feathers; and potentially the eggs and meat of infected birds.             |

| Disease                              | Animals   | Transmission  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Mpox</b>                          | Mainly monkeys. Also rats, squirrels and prairie dogs. Signs and symptoms in infected animals: mainly none. Skin sores, breathing problems in prairie dogs.   | Transmitted by touching infected animals or their body fluids; the bite or scratch of an infected animal; the meat of infected animals. |
| <b>Plague</b>                        | Mainly rats. Also rabbits, squirrels and prairie dogs. Signs and symptoms in infected animals: none in above. May cause disease in cats and occasionally dogs.  | Transmitted by flea bites and domestic rats; droplets in the air; the bodies of dead infected animals.                                  |
| <b>Leptospirosis</b>                 | Cattle, pigs, rodents (mainly rats). Signs and symptoms in infected animals: abortion; liver and kidney disease. None in rats.  | Transmitted by contact (through a cut, eyes, mouth etc.); or ingestion of the urine of an infected animal.                              |
| <b>MERS</b>                          | Camels. Signs and symptoms in infected animals: none.   | Transmitted by close contact with an infected animal or person.   |
| <b>Hantavirus pulmonary syndrome</b> | Rodents (mainly rats). Signs and symptoms in infected animals: none.  | Transmitted by droplets of rodent urine or faeces in the air; the bodies of dead infected rodents; a bite or a scratch.                 |
| <b>Anthrax</b>                       | Sheep, cattle (cows) and other animals. Signs and symptoms in infected animals: sudden death in sheep and cattle; neck swelling with breathing difficulties in pigs, dogs and cats.   | Transmitted by contact with, or eating, infected animal products; spores in the air.  |
| <b>Rabies</b>                        | Primarily dogs, but may affect other mammals such as cats, livestock and wildlife; initial signs include fever, pain and unusual or unexplained tingling, pricking, or burning sensations at the wound site, later progressive and fatal neurological signs | Dog bites and scratches cause 99% of the human rabies cases   |

### Handling poultry and livestock

| Poultry (birds)  | Sheep and cows   |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful when keeping poultry (birds) at home: keep the birds separated from the places where humans live and ensure that where they live is regularly kept clean and safe.</li> <li>• Keep domestic poultry birds away from the reach and contact of wild birds.</li> <li>• Keep the birds in a closed yard or enclosed free-range area where they have plenty of room to roam.</li> <li>• Do not let children play where the birds are kept.</li> <li>• Cook poultry (meat or eggs) thoroughly.</li> <li>• When preparing raw meat or eggs, always use clean utensils (knives, forks) and clean surfaces.</li> <li>• After cooking, use new utensils for eating. Never use the same utensils that you cook with. If no unused utensils are available, wash the utensils thoroughly before they are used for eating.</li> <li>• When slaughtering and handling poultry, be sure to protect yourself. Wear gloves and goggles if possible.</li> <li>• Never touch sick or dead birds without protection.</li> <li>• Observe birds for signs of sickness. If you detect illness, inform the animal health and welfare authorities.</li> <li>• At the slaughterhouse, abattoirs or when slaughtering at home, animals with visibly infected tissue and organ parts (e.g. tubercles, worms, eggs of parasites, etc.) should be immediately condemned and disposed of/destroyed. They should not be consumed or taken to the market for sale.</li> <li>• Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after any contact with living or dead animals (grooming, feeding, husbandry, etc.), their by-products (eggs, feathers, raw wool, etc.).</li> <li>• Dispose of animal carcasses appropriately and swiftly (by burning or burying).</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep sheep or cows in an enclosed yard or free range where they have plenty of room to roam.</li> <li>• Do not let children play where animals are kept.</li> <li>• Cook meat thoroughly.</li> <li>• Boil milk before drinking or cooking it.</li> <li>• When preparing raw meat, always use clean utensils (knives, forks) and clean surfaces.</li> <li>• After cooking, use new utensils for eating. Never use the same utensils that you cook with. If no unused utensils are available, wash the utensils thoroughly before they are used for eating.</li> <li>• When handling or slaughtering livestock, be sure to protect yourself. Wear gloves and goggles if possible.</li> <li>• Never touch sick or dead sheep, goat or cows without protection.</li> <li>• Observe animals for signs of sickness. If you detect illness, inform the animal health and welfare authorities.</li> <li>• At the slaughterhouse, abattoirs or when slaughtering at home, animals with visibly infected tissue and organ parts (e.g. tubercles, worms, eggs of parasites, etc) should be immediately condemned and disposed of/destroyed. They should not be consumed or taken to the market for sale.</li> <li>• Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after any contact with living or dead animals (grooming, feeding, husbandry, etc.), their by-products (eggs, feathers, raw wool, etc.).</li> <li>• Dispose of animal carcasses appropriately and swiftly (by burning or burying).</li> </ul> |

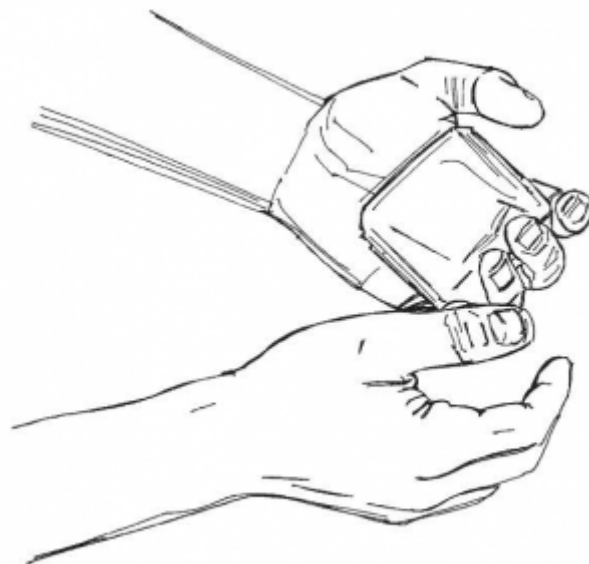
### ***Handling bushmeat (monkeys, rodents, wild pigs and others)***

Bushmeat should be discouraged as a food source, especially in areas where epidemic-causing infections are present in bushmeat. However, sometimes people may continue to eat bushmeat and to use bushmeat by-products. In these cases, volunteers should promote the following messages:

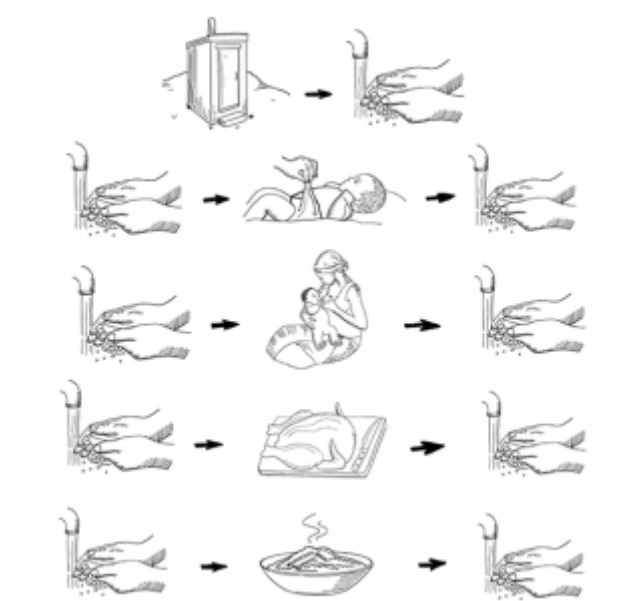
- Do not let children play where animal carcasses are kept.
- Cook bushmeat thoroughly.

- When preparing raw meat, always use clean utensils (knives, forks) and clean surfaces.
- After cooking, use new utensils for eating. Never use the same utensils that you cook with.
- When slaughtering, butchering or skinning bushmeat, be sure to protect yourself. Wear gloves and goggles if possible.
- If you come upon an animal in the bush that appears sick or is already dead, do not handle it without protection (for example, gloves).
- Observe animals for signs of sickness. If you detect illness, inform the authorities.
- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after any contact with living or dead animals.
- Dispose of animal carcasses appropriately and swiftly (by burning or burying).

## Community messages



08. Washing hands with soap



09. When to wash hands



25. Handling and slaughtering animals