

# HEALTH, SAFETY & FIRST AID



You will be living and working in a Wildlife Reserve where dangerous animals, reptiles and insects may be encountered. In view of this you will be expected to behave responsibly and sensibly at all times. You will also be required to accept and promptly obey instructions given to you by the reserve staff. You will be responsible for any consequences arising from your own behaviour and actions.

Ideally, nobody will need any first aid for the entire duration of the programme. However, prevention is better than cure, and you have a primary responsibility for your own safety, and for your own actions, which should not endanger yourself or anybody else. Abide by the field safety guidelines given, ensure that you are fit to carry out any task assigned to you. Please inform project staff immediately if you are feeling unwell, or if you perceive others to be acting in an unsafe manner.

## **First aiders**

All management are approved first-aiders, and will administer first aid if necessary. A first aid kit will always be left at the base camp. You should also carry your own basic first aid kit which should allow you to cope with minor scratches, headaches, insect bites and sun burn. If in doubt or feeling unwell, ask someone. We will also inform you on site of the correct procedures to follow in case of some incidents, such as snakebite (see below). Please note there is a first world private hospital 50 minutes from the Reserve. If you have any unusual medical condition or allergy you must bring sufficient medication with you for the duration of your stay.

## **SOME BASIC FIELD WORK SAFETY RULES**

- ALWAYS listen carefully to instructions and ALWAYS TAKE ADVICE GIVEN BY STAFF AND GUIDES.
- Always be careful where you step, the ground may be unstable and venomous snakes have been recorded in the reserve. When undertaking field work ALWAYS wear boots and trousers. Most snake bites occur on lower legs so wearing appropriate clothes will help to prevent bites.
- Do not approach, antagonize, provoke or tease ANY animal, even herbivores can be dangerous! Do not attempt to feed any animals.
- NEVER go off on your own. Always inform Melissa or Luke where you are going if you are working with another member of staff. Wherever you are going always carry a means of communication.
- During field work never be more than +-100 meters from a fellow field worker. If you need to stop for any reason, tell your guide or staff member.
- NO swimming in the lakes or rivers without permission.
- Always keep with you at least 1 litre of water, med kit, a sun hat and sun cream! Excessive exposure to the sun can be dangerous and is always painful.
- Drink lots of water (small amounts regularly) and keep out of the sun whenever possible or keep head and shoulders covered up. Give yourself at least a few days to acclimatize to the heat.
- If you wish to drink alcohol on social occasions, then please moderate your consumption and act in a sensible fashion.
- No spirits or narcotics allowed on the reserve for any reason
- No smoking in tents, huts or on field work. We don't want to start any unwanted fires.
- Don't touch the electrified fence. The voltage is set to shock a rhino.

## **SNAKE BITE PROCEDURE**

Of the 130 snakes in southern Africa, only 34 are venomous of which 14 species have caused fatalities.

### **Venom can be:**

- 1) Neurotoxic, causing dizziness, convulsions and respiratory difficulties, (e.g. mambas & cobras).
- 2) Cytotoxic tissue damage and internal bleeding (adders).
- 3) Haemotoxic, causing dizziness, vomiting, internal bleeding, (e.g. Boomslang and Vine Snake).

### **Snakes only strike when they feel threatened, therefore when encountering a snake:**

- Stay very still, do not make any sudden movements or loud noises, try not to antagonize the snake.
- Back away from the snake very slowly until you are a safe distance away.
- Spectacles or sunglasses are useful for preventing venom entering the eyes from spitting cobras.

### **In case of snake bite:**

- Before approaching the victim check the area is free of danger.
- Keep calm, immediately reassure and keep the victim calm and still to avoid increasing the heart rate and speeding up the movement of poison around the body. If possible, lay the victim down in the shade.
- Immediately contact Reserve staff by cell phone or radio giving as much information as possible but especially your location as precisely as possible. If you do not have means of communication send someone for assistance leaving a first aider to tend the victim. Ensure the person going for assistance knows his way and the location of the incident.
- Continue to reassure victim to avoid the development of shock
- Apply pressure to the area of bite and then apply a firm, crepe bandage to the full length of the affected limb. Do not elevate the area. Use a splint to prevent movement if available. Do not use a tourniquet
- Get someone to accurately record the proceedings and time of the incident, and also to monitor the victim's status.
- Keep talking to the victim and keep a check on vital signs. Consciousness, response, awareness, pulse strength/rate, breathing depth/rate, etc.
- Get a description of the snake if possible but in no circumstances pursue it!
- Monitor victim for shock, if shock occurs, lay the victim down, raising legs or arms (not those that have been bitten) to increase blood flow to the vital organs.
- If victim loses consciousness place in recovery position and monitor.
- If breathing stops administer artificial ventilation (10 breaths at 4 second intervals). If circulation stops administer CPR (30 chest compressions followed by two breaths, in repeated cycles) until help arrives.
- Evacuate victim to a professional medical authority ASAP, keeping all notes and details of the incident with the victim.

### **Remember**

- Prevention is better than cure – most snake bites are on arms and legs so wear sensible clothing and footwear at all times. Do not increase your chances of being bitten by behaving irresponsibly.
- Walk around heavily!
- Statistically, you are more likely to get hit by lightning than bitten by a snake.
- Snake bites are rare and fatalities from snake bites are very rare!

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

### **If you have a VHF radio on you:**

Radio Dougal (Charlie 1) straight away, telling him where you are and what has happened.

**If you have a mobile phone on you call:**

**Dougal: 083 380 1914 Lynne: 083 453 3133 Luke: 083 706 9522 Melissa: 073 207 8250**