

Animal Scouting

Practice decision-making around whether produce is safe to harvest based on a walkthrough of a crop growing area to look for signs of animals.

KEY TERMS

Domestic animals: animals kept as livestock, working animals or pets, for example: chickens, goats, cattle, horses, dogs, cats, etc.

Feces, fecal matter: animal excreta; poop

Scouting: the practice of walking a farm for the purpose of observing something, for example crop diseases, pest pressure, or wildlife signs

Wildlife: animals naturally found in the environment; for example: deer, rabbits, wild turkeys, raccoons, mice, Canada geese, songbirds, moles, voles, etc.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

- Printed or digital sample Animal Scouting Record
- Printed or digital Animal Scouting Risk Matrix

Alternate Supplies

- For the virtual version of this activity, you will also need an electronic device with internet access to access the activity at bit.ly/3lvsMMN
- Wildlife damage flashcards can be use as an alternate activity: bit.ly/3LAPZb3

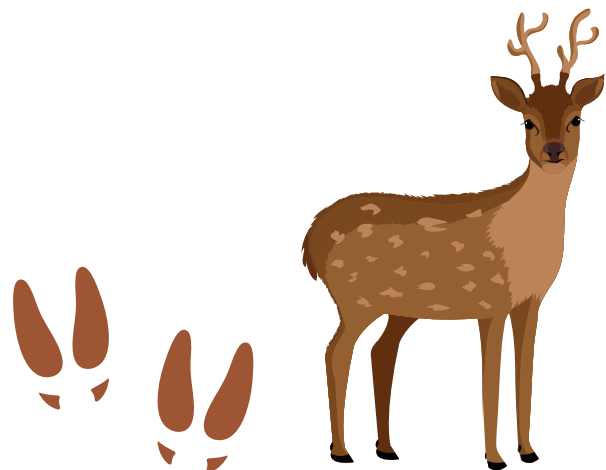


How do you do this?

Practice different scouting techniques in a crop production area. When you find evidence of animal activity, record your observations on the Sample Animal Scouting Record and discuss as a group what should be done about it using the Animal Scouting Risk Matrix tool as a reference.

Scouting Techniques:

- **Scout the perimeter:** Walking the perimeter of the field can help focus your scouting and it allows you to see where critters have entered the field.
- **Scout a row:** Scouting a row provides a sample to judge how much contamination may be in an area and also give you a heads up that adjacent rows have also been affected. However, it's not representative of the whole growing area.
- **Zig Zag the field:** This involves walking the entire crop production area. The benefit of scouting the whole thing is that you are less likely to miss any evidence of animals and greatly reduces the risk of harvesting contaminated produce. Depending on the size of your farm, zig zagging through the field and checking each row can be time consuming
- **Scouting common animal habitats:** Edge of woods, water sources, brush piles, compost piles, tall grass or wildflower areas, equipment in grass, bunched up used plastic from tunnels, piles of remay, piled fence posts, etc.





What does it mean for my farm?

Talk about what you would do if you found the following scenarios (use the [Animal Scouting Risk Matrix](#) handout as a guide):

- Find only footprints, NO crop damage or feces
- Find a few piles of dog poop in your leafy greens
- Find that deer have significantly munched on your swiss chard.
- Find widespread bird poop on raspberries
- Find one pile of raccoon poop in your carrots

Discuss with co-learners how what you learned in this activity could:

- reduce risks
- impact farming practices and management
- impact market opportunities
- impact farm production and harvest

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL LEARNING

- Handout: Rodents and Birds
- Handout: Livestock





Produce Safety

Where are risks on the farm?

Animal Scouting Record

Date	Animal Activity	Area Found	Action Taken	Recorded By



Animal Scouting Risk Matrix

	One instance	Sporadic	Widespread
Tracks	Low	Moderate	Moderate
Crop damage	Low	Moderate	High
Fecal contamination	Moderate	Moderate	High

Matrix Source: MSU Extension Agrifood Safety