

6. Investigations

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Introduction

Investigations are vital to record exactly what is happening in the places where animals are suffering and being abused. Investigations are the ultimate witness to this abuse. They can be used in a variety of way, including media work and consumer awareness and for prosecutions. Many campaigns have been successful through the power of good investigations footage. When shown on television, this can reach millions, and gain support and supporters (including donations).

The main objectives of an investigation are: -

- To document, through video/photographic evidence and eyewitness accounts, precisely how farm animals are treated
- To uncover evidence that laws & regulations surrounding farm animal welfare are being broken
- To provide investigative material to fuel campaigns
- To provide investigative material to be used as evidence to lobby for changes in legislation to improve farm animal welfare

Purpose of a Specific Investigation

- Investigations can be costly, time consuming and physically & emotionally draining
- Investigations should only be undertaken if there is a specific aim in using the anticipated results
- Investigations should not stand alone, but be part of a co-ordinated strategy of the particular animal welfare organisation

The strategy should always be established before any investigation takes place

Investigation Problems

Many campaigns are now based around investigations, yet the approach (even on some that are successful) is often haphazard and casual. Investigations must be an integral part of strategic and operational planning.

Remembering the investigative journalist's tag '*The news is something that somebody doesn't want you to know*' in planning your investigation.

Each investigation has to be taken as an opportunity not to be squandered. Once you have visited, your cover is blown, and you may not have a second opportunity.

The biggest problems in investigations are caused by poor planning and lack of experience.

Investigation Skills

A good investigation requires a variety of skills:

- Understanding of how the investigation fits into overall campaign strategy
- Filming and photography
- Interrogation/questioning
- Compilation and assessment of data
- Understanding protocols for record keeping
- Familiarity and understanding of subject
- Knowledge and understanding of relevant legislation
- Flexibility and clear headedness

An individual is unlikely to possess all of these skills, so training and development will be necessary.

Tip!

If your organisation does not have investigations expertise, consider employing a professional investigation organisation. 'Tracks Investigations' (link below) includes experienced animal protection investigators. They can either carry out investigations for you, or train your staff.

Research

Research is the first stage in operational planning. It comes *after strategy setting*, and should be focused towards this.

- **Background information/research**
See section on research
- **Animal welfare legislation**
You need to obtain all relevant legislation and codes/rules. The basic premise of any investigation is that: animal protection legislation is not working, or if there isn't any legislation, you should be calling for some!
- **Identify possible problems for animal welfare.**
Armed with all the information, identify specific problems for animal welfare associated with the investigation

Take legislation and key documents on the investigation, if possible.

Planning

Once you have established why you want to investigate, and what you want to

investigate, you need to start to plan an investigation. The following is a step-by-step guide to undertaking an investigation.

Methods of investigation

Having established what you want to find, you need to work out how?

Elements of good planning include:

- Control centre for investigation
- Timescale for investigation
- Budget for investigation
- Personnel for investigation
- Administration for investigation
- Lists and locations that need investigating
- Route and transportation
- Equipment required for investigation
- How to investigate - the tricky part!

How to investigate

Every investigation is unique but the following are key considerations for investigations: -

- ***Cover Stories*** – If needed. Can include tourist, agricultural student, arts student, photography student, agricultural journalist etc. Become familiar with your new persona & practice beforehand.
- ***Shooting Principles & Techniques*** (see *Annex 1* below)
- ***Open or Covert filming?*** (See *Annex 2* below)
- ***Equipment*** (See *Annex 3* below)
- ***Evidence*** (See *Annex 4* below)
- ***Use an Investigations Template*** (See *Annex 5* below)
- ***Quality*** - if you have obtained the opportunity to film openly it is a tragic waste to spoil your ingenuity by relaxing and taking poor quality results. See *Annex 1* below for advice on shooting principles and techniques.

It is all too easy to get caught up in the emotion of what you are filming, so again practice as much as possible beforehand with the camera you will be using. A good tip is to watch the news programmes on TV to see how programmes are made up from sequences of different shots.

At the end of the day, you might shoot hours of useless film that you have to watch!

Never talk to the media or friends about how you conducted undercover investigations, or the equipment you used.

Distribution of Reports/Video

Use and distribute the material gained as part of your overall strategy. Video footage can be used as follows: -

- Supplied to local, national and international media
- Used for videos, photographs, publications, news or magazine articles etc.
- Used for legal or advocacy purposes e.g. lawmakers, enforcement authorities, courts etc.

- Supplied to other animal advocacy organizations to spread the campaign

Annex 1

Shooting Principles & Techniques

The following shooting principles and techniques are a simple, but effective guide to the main features of successful investigations: -

- Buy/borrow the best available camera/video
- Be familiar with the controls of the camera (and know its limitations)
- Write and memorise a 'Shot List' of shots and sequences you require
- Use the automatic settings until you are confident to use the manual overrides (this can take months/years of practice)
- Never set the date option on the video
- Keep the camera steady - golden rule
- Try each shot as a wide shot, then mid, then close up
- Each shot should be held for at least 20 seconds (This is difficult.)
- Try not to zoom in/out - It makes for uneasy viewing
- Try not to pan/tilt unless you have a tripod
- Try not to talk over your footage unless absolutely necessary
- Understand and use lighting
- Use video lights/ high powered torch in dark conditions
- Don't forget flash
- Keep yourself focussed. It's difficult, but essential
- Use good/appropriate film
- Simple filming is good
- Be calm; take your time. More is better than less
- Review and index photos and tapes

Annex 2

Covert Investigations

Covert Systems

Covert investigations follow the same principles as other cameras, but they can be much more difficult! In particular, remember: -

- Covert cameras are prone to malfunction
- If you must use a covert camera, practice as much as possible beforehand
- Practice is more important because you are not looking through the viewfinder
- Lens is the size of a pinhead, so light more critical
- These cameras are very wide angle with lot of depth of field, so get close
- Check camera position
- Don't be lazy and only use covert system
- Do not show off your camera

Undercover Procedures

- Live your cover & stick to cover story
- Identity card required?
- Have structure to questions, for building picture
- Who are you talking to – weigh credibility/knowledge
- Always cross check evidence
- Don't believe hearsay – but test it
- Don't gossip
- Make notes as tables
- Keep a diary
- Remember rules of evidence
- Surveillance
- Keep eyes and ears open
- Don't take short cuts
- Safety should come first
- Don't forget to check privacy and data protection legislation

Annex 3

Equipment

Just some suggestions to consider: -

- Maps (road/track)
- Note book(s)
- Watch(s) with date
- Pens/pencils
- Plug adapter, if another country
- Tape recorder
- Spare tapes
- Binocular, compass, camping equipment for rural investigations
- High powered torch
- Photo or video camera, with necessary attachments/chargers etc.

(Could be using hidden video, long range video, or even video cameras that see in the dark)

Don't forget to check all equipment!

Annex 4

Evidence

Documenting evidence

- Record all relevant details including dates and times, detailed descriptions etc.
- Reports should be authoritative and comprehensive
- Have shorter more accessible leaflets too, if public campaign
- Videos for media – broadcast quality, short (max 12 minutes), double sound track (first cut footage back to max 2 hours, and then review with colleagues)

Assessing evidence

- Expect the person to deny everything
- What does your evidence actually prove
- Don't release material until you have proved your point
- Don't simply release material just because you have it
- If investigation unsuccessful, consider repeating
- How best can evidence be used to change the situation for animals: negotiation, prosecution, lobbying, campaigning/media?

Annex 5

Investigations Template (*with thanks to CIWF*)

Rationale for Investigations Template

- To develop innovative approaches to providing quality investigations.
- To ensure that investigative material reaches as wide an audience as possible.
- To ensure that the Investigations Unit does not operate in isolation from CIWF departments and branches.
- To review and clarify the needs of investigative material by CIWF departments.
- To optimise the resources of the Investigations Unit to meet the needs of CIWF department, branches and consultants.

TEMPLATE

Project Title	
Overall Objective	
UK Objective	
European Objective	
Relevant CIWF reports/briefings	
Other background information	
Relevant Legislation	
Possible problems for Animal Welfare	
Images/Information desired (including format)	
Methods of Investigation <i>Brainstorm</i>	
Timescale for Investigation	
Media Collaborations	
Investigative Partners	
Planned end use of	

Investigative material	
Timetable for Release	
Report	
Investigators Diaries	
Video	
How To be Used by:	
Media	
Information	
Fundraising	
Political	
Campaigning	
French	
Irish	
Dutch	
Southern European	
CEEC - specify	
ECFA - specify	
Language versions required - specify	

Further Resources

🔗 Web Sites

Tracks Investigations

<http://www.tracksinvestigations.org/>

The BUAV's Undercover Work

<http://www.buav.org/investigations>

Mercy for Animals – Undercover Investigations

http://www.mercyforanimals.org/undercover_investigations.asp

Animal Liberation (Australia)'s Open Rescue Site

<http://www.openrescue.org/>