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"'Bats Who Harm' and 'Bats Who May Be Harmed': The Interspecies Politics of Virus Sampling"

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The 2013–2016 Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa galvanized a quest for more knowledge with regards to the ecology of the disease. In its immediate aftermath, research initiatives, at the junction of biosecurity and One Health, were mounted to elucidate the circulation of the Ebola virus and other emergent pathogens through sampling local wildlife, in particular bats. The article investigates the knowledge, affects, and practices mitigating care and risk in encounters between human animals and potentially contaminated nonhuman animals. Grounded in an ethnography of the labor of wildlife sampling by Guinean veterinarians, it adopts an interspecies perspective on the One Health laboratory, a place where relations between animals and humans are inflected by a postcolonial, gendered, and anthropocentric imbalance of power. It argues that, rather than blurring interspecies boundaries, scientific care for sampled bats may cement hierarchies, with consequences for samplers and animals. (Abstract)

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