ARCHAEOZOOLOGY

Archaeozoological research focuses on all animal-derived materials that survive in the archaeological record—bones and teeth, shells, eggshells, even traces of leather, etc. — providing direct material evidence of the multiple interactions between human communities and animals in the past. The analysis of these remains enables a systematic investigation of the relationship between ancient societies and the animal world across its environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and symbolic dimensions. Such remains also constitute genuine biological archives, from which biomolecular information—such as ancient DNA and isotopic data—can be extracted, offering crucial insights into provenance, mobility, herding practices, and dietary regimes.

This approach addresses key themes in archaeology and ancient history, including strategies of animal resource procurement and management, herding, hunting, and fishing practices, the organization of production and consumption, as well as the identity-related and ritual values attributed to animals. Archaeozoological analyses reconstruct the composition of exploited species, age and sex profiles, and butchery and processing marks, providing data on technical expertise, economic choices, and patterns of specialization. Taphonomic study further allows the distinction between anthropogenic and natural accumulations, clarifying site formation processes and the degree of stratigraphic integrity.

In a highly symbolic context such as the Piazza d'Armi necropolis in Spoleto, archaeozoological research serves as an important tool for complementing both traditional archaeological data and more innovative approaches. Examining the animal remains associated with funerary practices helps illuminate ritual and social dimensions that would otherwise be difficult to detect, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Protohistoric communities in central Italy.