AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

Code of Ethics

Contents

1. Preamble: 3
2. Ethical Considerations 3
a. Legal Compliance 3
b. Animal welfare 4
c. Research 4
d. Population Management 5
e. Visitor and Staff engagement 5
3. Periodic review 6
4. Application and Enforcement of this code of ethics 6
a. Submission of Contraventions 6
b. Investigation 6
c. Sanctions 7
d. Appeal Process 7
e. Communication of Outcome 8
5. References 10

1. Preamble:

All members of the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) accept that a code of ethics is required to guide professionalism in the association and to continually improve all standards within a scientifically based framework.

The AAWHC bases its code of ethics on a number of related documents and guidelines:

- AAWHC Memorandum of Incorporation
- World Association of Zoos and Aquaria (WAZA): Code of ethics – as an Association member of WAZA we abide by the WAZA bylaws and code of ethics as guided by 4 foundation documents:
    - Caring for Wildlife: The World Zoo and Aquarium Animal Welfare Strategy (2015)
    - Committing to Conservation: The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy (2015)
    - Protecting our Planet: The World Zoo and Aquarium Sustainability Strategy 2020 – 2030 (2020)
    - Social Change for Conservation: The World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Education Strategy (2020)
- Legislation specifically to the country where each facility is housed relating to animal welfare and animals in human care.

AAWHC Members commit to strive for best practices in animal welfare, to become effective conservation organisations, to reach sustainability outcomes operationally and in their strategies; and to become centres of excellence in conservation education and social change towards biodiversity.

AAWHC Members will have a committee or committees where animal welfare, research and ethics are discussed and documented.

2. Ethical Considerations

a. Legal Compliance

AAWHC Members will act in accordance with local, state, national and international laws, conventions, treaties and regulations in terms of caring for animals, trade, procurement, movement of animals and treating all people and animals with dignity and respect.

AAWHC Members will conduct their work in accordance with required permits and licenses pertaining to all aspects of its operations in terms of animals, waste, water, enclosure design, visitor facilities and staff.

b. Animal welfare

AAWHC Members will ensure that they apply the five domains of animal welfare to the care of the animals within their control: (based on the Mellor et al, 2020, Five domains for animal welfare).

The Five Domains Model

Physical/Functional Domains

Survival-Related Factors						Situation-Related Factors	
1: Nutrition		2: Environment		3: Health		4: Behaviour	
Restrictions on:	*Opportunities to:*	*Unavoidable/imposed conditions*	*Available conditions:*	*Presence of:*	*Little or no:*	*Exercise of 'agency' impeded by:*	*'Agency' exercised via:*
Water intake Food intake Food quality Food variety	Drink enough water Eat enough food Eat a balanced diet Eat a variety of foods	Thermal extremes Unsuitable substrate Close confinement Atmospheric pollutants: CO_2, ammonia, dust, smoke	Thermally tolerable Suitable substrate Space for freer movement Fresh air	Disease: acute, chronic Injury: acute, chronic; husbandry mutilations Functional impairment: due to limb amputation; or lung, heart, vascular, kidney, neural or other problems	Disease Injury Functional impairment	Invariant, barren environment (ambient, physical, biotic) Inescapable sensory impositions Choices markedly restricted	Varied, novel, engaging environmental challenges Congenial sensory inputs Available engaging choices
Voluntary overeating Force-feeding	Eating correct quantities	Unpleasant/strong odours Light: inappropriate intensity Loud/otherwise unpleasant noise	Pleasant/tolerable odours Light intensity tolerable Noise exposure acceptable	Poisons	Poisoning	Constraints on environment-focused activity Constraints on animal-to-animal interactive activity	Free movement Exploration Foraging/hunting Bonding/reaffirming bonds Rearing young Playing Sexual activity
		Environmental monotony: ambient, physical, lighting	Normal environmental variability	Obesity/leanness	Body condition appropriate		
		Unpredictable events	Predictability	Poor physical fitness: muscle de-conditioning	Good fitness level	Limits on threat avoidance, escape or defensive activity Limitations on sleep/rest	Using refuges, retreat, or defensive attack Sleep/rest sufficient

Affective Experience Domain

5: Mental State							
Negative	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Positive*	*Negative*	*Positive*
Thirst	Wetting/quenching pleasures of drinking	*Forms of discomfort:* Thermal: chilling, overheating	*Forms of comfort:* Thermal	Breathlessness	Comfort of good health and high functional capacity	Anger, frustration	Calmness
Hunger (general)	Pleasures of different tastes/smells	Physical: joint pain, skin irritation Physical: stiffness, muscle tension	Physical	Pain: many types Debility, weakness Sickness, malaise		Boredom, helplessness Loneliness, isolation	Engaged, in control Affectionate sociability Maternally rewarded
Hunger (salt)	Pleasure of salt taste Masticatory pleasures	Respiratory: e.g. breathlessness Olfactory	Respiratory Olfactory	Nausea Dizziness		Depression Sexual frustration	Excitation/playfulness Sexual gratification
Malnutrition malaise	Postprandial satiety	Auditory: impairment, pain Visual: glare/darkness eye strain	Auditory Visual	Physical exhaustion	Vitality of fitness	Anxiety, fearfulness, panic, anger	Secure/protected/confident
Bloated, over full Gastrointestinal pain	Gastrointestinal comfort	Malaise from unnatural constancy	Variety-related comfort			Neophobia Exhaustion	Likes novelty Energised/refreshed

Welfare Status

Domain 1: Nutrition
Domain 2: Physical environment
Domain 3: Health
Domain 4: Behavioural Interaction
Domain 5: Mental state

AAWHC Members acknowledge that euthanasia is a management option in the maintenance of a healthy animal collection.

AAWHC Members will adhere to sourcing species for their collections in an ethical manner and which is legally compliant with the laws of the country. Disposal of animals will be done in the same manner.

AAWHC Members will avoid the transfer of animals to inappropriate and distressing environments.

No species may be purposefully sourced from *in situ* (the wild) without the proper processes in order and solely for conservation purposes.

c. Research

AAWHC Members should contribute to the advancement of biological knowledge by participating or allowing research projects in their facilities and disseminate information acquired.

AAWHC Members will ensure that research conducted on their animals is approved by their ethics committees.

Research should be conducted in line with the WAZA research ethics.

Research should be guided by the three (3) R's principles - Replacement, Reduction & Refinement.

Replacement:
This principle encourages researchers to find alternatives to using animals whenever possible. This could involve using cell cultures, computer models, or other non-animal methods.

Reduction:
This principle focuses on minimizing the number of animals used in research while still obtaining valid and reliable results.

Refinement:
This principle emphasizes improving experimental procedures and animal care practices to minimize pain, suffering, distress, and lasting harm to animals used in research.

Where possible, members should donate specimen samples to the national/international biobank facility.

d. Population Management

AAWHC Members will keep a record system of the species and specimens displayed at their facilities.

AAWHC Members will make every effort to maintain the demographic and genetic integrity of their species.

In-situ and *Ex-situ* conservation programmes are imperative to AAWHC. The IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) recognises the significant contributions that botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos can, and do, bring to conserving wild animals, fungi and plants. SSC urges all botanic gardens, aquariums and zoos to meet their conservation potential and to work as valued members of a well-integrated conservation community to ensure the survival and health of wild populations of animals, fungi and plants. It is important for AAWHC members to support the conservation programme coordinators of AAWHC in such programmes.

e. Visitor and Staff engagement

AAWHC will treat all visitors and staff with dignity and their safety at each facility will be prioritised. All cultural and ethical considerations will be observed. Members will treat other members with the same considerations.

Visitors and staff will be given opportunities to further their knowledge in terms of the caring for all biodiversity, connection with nature and to participate in conservation education programmes.

Communications will be conducted in a professional manner, in the business language of the respective country.

3. Periodic review

The AAWHC Ethics committee will review the Code of Ethics every five years, unless circumstances require an immediate review. The reviewed document will be presented to members and board for approval.

4. Application and Enforcement of this code of ethics

AAWHC will establish an Ethics Committee within its members of the board to monitor and investigate any reported cases of misconduct.

The committee will compromise of 3 board members as appointed by the chairperson of the board and external experts may be included to assist with the investigations.

a. Submission of Contraventions

All matters of concerns will be submitted in writing to the chairperson of the board with supporting documentation.

b. Investigation

The Ethics Committee will investigate all matters fairly and transparently, with due respect to the person or facility, taking care not to cause reputational damage that is unwarranted. The investigation should not take longer than one month to complete. If the investigation requires additional time, this will be communicated to all affected parties. Once the investigation is complete, the Ethics Committee will present the outcome to the board for a final decision.

The board is committed to protect its members unless such members have committed an illegal act. The board will work with law enforcement when required.

c. Sanctions

A decision is made by a two thirds majority vote of the board whether to dismiss the case, or to apply a sanction.

Three levels of sanctions may be imposed at the discretion of the Board:

Warning – If the transgression is a once off action that requires no remedial action, the member may be given a warning which will be valid for a period of 12 months.

Suspension – If the transgression requires remedial action, the member may be suspended for a period until suitable remedial action has been taken. This suspension may not exceed a period of 12 months, after which the membership will be terminated.

Termination – If the transgression is of such nature that the member through its membership of the association will bring disrepute to the association, their membership may be terminated.

d. Appeal Process

The member will be notified of the decision in writing by the chairperson of the board stating the reasons behind the decision.

If the outcome is unfavourable, the member is given the opportunity to submit a rebuttal to the Board within 14 working days of receipt of the notice of the decision.

The rebuttal will be considered by the Board and the member will be notified of the decision in writing by the chairperson of the board stating the reasons behind the decision within 14 working days.

If still unfavourable, the member is given a further opportunity to appeal the decision to the members within 30 days of receipt of notice of the decision.

The appeal shall include the grounds of the appeal and supporting evidence. The appeal shall be included in the agenda of the next Annual General Meeting of the association and decided by ordinary resolution of the voting members. A special meeting of members may be held if the AGM is more than 3 months away from the date of appeal.

A resolution of a majority of the voting members of the association in a general meeting deprives that person of their membership, provided that before the voting members may consider the resolution, the member concerned shall be given notice of the meeting and the resolution, and the member shall be given a reasonable opportunity to make a presentation, in person or through a representative, to the meeting, before the resolution is put to a vote.

The outcome of the appeal shall be final and binding, and, if refused any re-application for membership by the applicant shall only be considered once the institution has implemented corrective measures and can provide evidence that they have achieved significant progress to address the non-conformance.

The member shall be classified as suspended during any process of appeal.

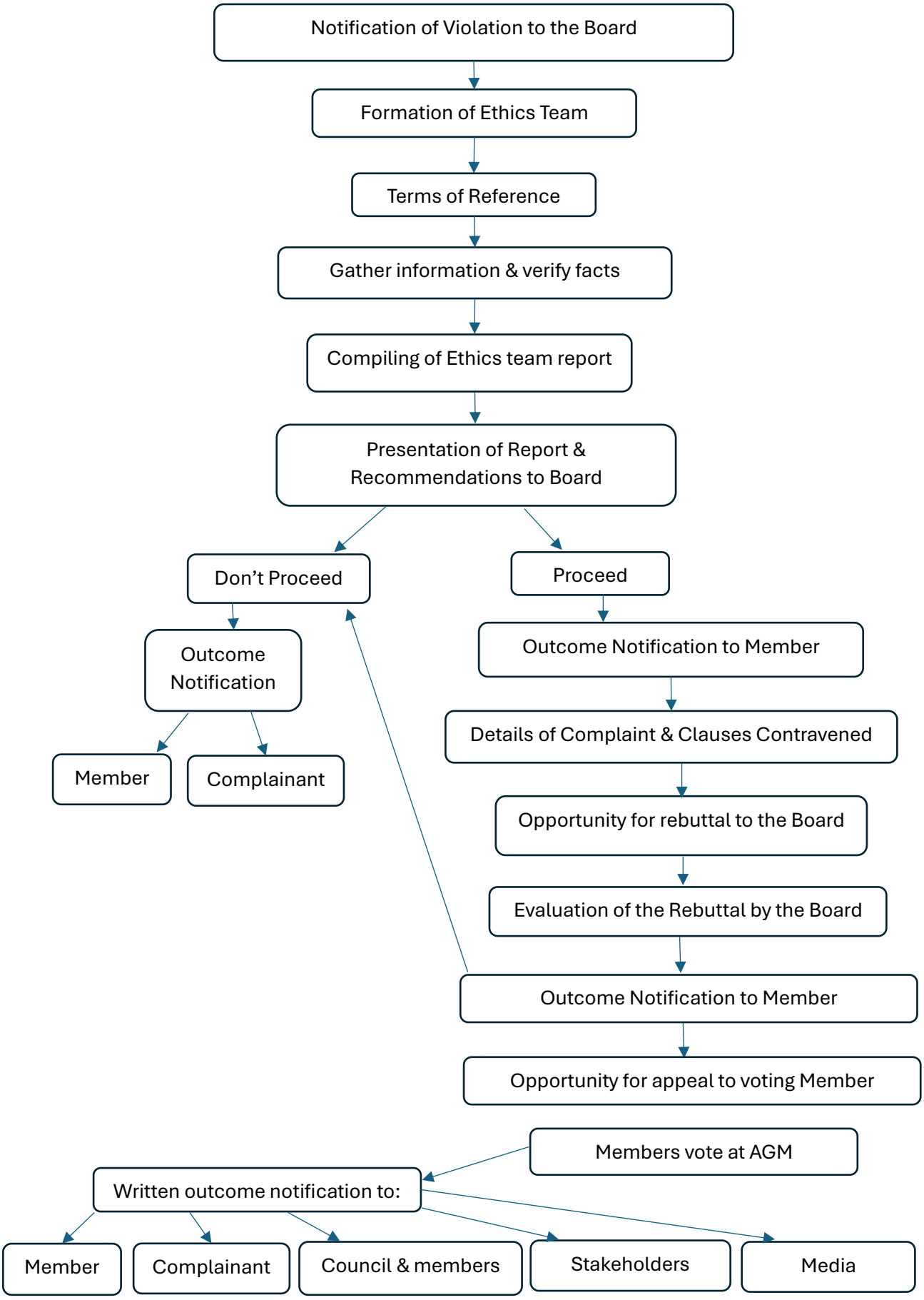
Any membership fees due by the member under investigation or during suspension should be kept up to date for the duration of the process.

e. Communication of Outcome

The chairperson of the board will communicate the outcome of the investigation, appeal and final decision of the Board and members to the CEO or Representative of the member, as well as to the complainant, other association members and relevant stakeholders.

If necessary, media statements or any external communication regarding any contraventions by an AAWHC member will be approved by the AAWHC board.

Ethics Procedure Flowchart



5. References

Mellor et al, 2020. Five domains for animal welfare.

WAZA Code of Ethics

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