AFRICAN ASSOCIATION FOR WILDLIFE IN HUMAN CARE (AAWHC)

Population Management Policy

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1. Purpose

This Population Management Policy has been developed to ensure that members of the African Association for Wildlife in Human Care (AAWHC) have a consistent approach to the management and assessment of the animal populations within their care. It offers leadership in the formulation of principles and accreditation standards for population management and supports the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums Conservation and Welfare Strategies as well as the 2027 WAZA Population Management Goal.

This policy will be updated as required to reflect evolving philosophies and practices in population management within wildlife-keeping institutions.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Accredited members of the AAWHC. All other members are encouraged to abide by or achieve the standards set by the policy.

3. Definitions

Acquisition: Acquisition of animals can occur through breeding (births, hatchings, cloning, and division of marine invertebrates = "fragging"), trade, donation, lease, loan, transfer (inter- and intra-institution), purchase, collection, confiscation, appearing on zoo property, or rescue and/or rehabilitation for release.

Annual monitoring and Due diligence: Due diligence for the health of animals out on loan is important. Examples of annual monitoring and documentation include and are not limited to inventory records, health records, photos of the recipient's facilities, and direct inspections by staff of the loaning facilities. The level of due diligence will depend on professional relationships.

Data sharing: When specimens are transferred, the transferring and receiving institutions should agree on data that must be transferred with the specimen(s). Examples of associated documentation include provenance of the animal, original permits, tags and other metadata, life history data for the animal, how and when specimens were collected and conserved, etc.

Dispose: "Dispose/Disposing of" in this document is limited to complete and permanent removal of an individual via incineration, burying or other means of permanent destruction

Documentation: Examples of documentation include ZIMS records, "Breeding Loan" agreements, chain-of-custody logs, letters of reference, transfer agreements, and transaction documents. This is documentation that maximizes data sharing.

Domestic animal: Examples of domestic animals may include certain camelids, cattle, cats, dogs, goats, pigs, sheep, budgerigars, chickens, doves, ducks, geese, or koi, etc.

Euthanasia: Humane death. This act removes an animal from the managed population. Specimens can be maintained in museums or cryopreserved collections. Humane euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the established euthanasia policy of the institution and follow the

recommendations of current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals).

Surplus: At times, the number of individual animals in a population exceeds carrying capacity and may be designated to be removed from the institution's animal collection.

Feral: Feral animals are animals that have escaped from domestication or have been abandoned to the wild and have become wild, and the offspring of such animals. Feral animals may be acquired for temporary or permanent reasons.

Group: Examples of colonial, group-living, or prolific species include and are not limited to certain terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, fish, sharks/rays, amphibians, reptiles, birds, rodents, bats, big herds, and other mammals.

Non-AAWHC entity: Non–AAWHC entities includes facilities not audited by the AAWHC, facilities in other zoological regions, academic institutions, museums, research facilities, private individuals, etc.

Reintroduction: Examples of transfers outside of a living captive population include movements of animals from captive populations to the wild through reintroductions or other legal means.

Specimen: Examples of specimens include animal parts, materials and products including bodily fluids, cell lines, clones, digestive content, DNA, faeces, marine invertebrate (coral) fragments ("frags"), germplasm, and tissues.

Transaction documents: Transaction documents must be signed by the authorized representatives of both parties, and copies must be retained by both parties. In the case of loans, the owner's permission for appropriate activities should be documented in the institutional records. This document(s) should be completed prior to any transfer. In the case of rescue, confiscation, and evacuation due to natural disasters, documentation (e.g., a hand over certificate) must be kept to reconcile the inventory and chain of custody after the event occurs.

Transfer: Transfer occurs when an animal leaves the institution for any reason. Reasons for transfer or euthanasia may include cooperative population management (genetic, demographic or behavioral management), animal welfare or behavior management reasons (including sexual maturation and individual management needs). Types of transfer include withdrawal through donation, trade, lease, loan, inter- and intra-institution transfers, sale, escape, theft. Reintroduction to the wild, humane euthanasia or natural death are other possible individual animal changes in a population.

4. Policy Statement

All AAWHC members are committed to contributing to the conservation of the natural world. Through our diverse animal collections, we aim to inspire our visitors to do the same.

Animal collection planning for each AAWHC member is unique to their facility based on their operational goals and mandate. The Association recommends that members develop their own position statements, policies, and procedures that align with AAWHC's Population Management Policy.

This policy outlines the minimum requirements for collection planning and population management, by all AAWHC members, and it should be viewed in conjunction with other relevant policies.

5. Principles

This AAWHC Population Management Policy will serve as the default policy for AAWHC member institutions. Institutions should develop their own policies on responsible population management and animal collection plans based on their mandate and operational goals. Any institutional policy must incorporate and not conflict with the AAWHC standards.

5.1 Institutional collection planning and management

The animal collections held at AAWHC facilities are the backbone for all operational activities and form the platform for conservation, education, research and overall visitor experience. In order for facilities to be sustainable, and where possible hold genetically and demographically viable populations, it is imperative for facilities to know exactly what they hold and the purpose of each species.

Animal collections must be consistent with the mission of the institution, as reflected in its institutional collection plan, which addresses its exhibition/education, conservation, and/or scientific goals regarding the individual or species. Collection planning should be goal driven, actively managed and regularly assessed.

5.2 Transfer, Euthanasia and Reintroduction Requirements

The AAWHC Population Management Policy serves to ensure that the health and welfare of individual animals is a priority during acquisition, transfer/reintroduction activities and disposition processes, and that animals from AAWHC member institutions and related facilities are not transferred to individuals or organizations that lack the appropriate expertise or facilities to care for them.

The policy further ensures that there is a proper standard of conduct for AAWHC members during these activities, including adherence to all applicable laws and regulations.

The policy also provides guidance to ensure that the health and conservation of wild populations and ecosystems are carefully considered during any transaction process.

5.3 Support regional conservation breeding programmes

As per the AAWHC Code of Ethics, *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 goals of AAWHC's cooperatively managed populations and associated programmes.

6. Guidelines

6.1 Institutional collection planning and management

6.1.1 Institutions must keep up to date records of all animals in their care and assess the collection needs, at least on an annual basis, based on their mandate.

6.1.2 AAWHC must have an animal collection plan which is consistent with the mission of the institution. Collection planning should be goal driven, actively managed and regularly assessed. Where possible, the IUCN Survival Commission guidelines on the use of *ex situ* management for species conservation should be applied

6.1.3 Where possible, each specimen held must be uniquely identifiable. For some colonial, group-living, or prolific species, it may be impossible or highly impractical to identify individual animals when these individuals are maintained in a group. These species can be maintained, acquisitioned, transferred, and managed as a group or colony, or as part of a group or colony.

6.1.4 Acquisitions or transfers/euthanasia/reintroductions must be documented through institutional record keeping systems. The ability to identify which animal is being transferred is very important and the method of identifying each individual animal should be documented. Any existing documentation must accompany all transfers.

6.1.5 Ownership and any applicable chain-of-custody should be documented and should provide the terms and conditions of animal acquisitions, transfers and loans (e.g. breeding agreements). If such information does not exist, an explanation must be provided regarding such animals and specimens.

6.1.6 In the case of animals (living or non-living) and their parts, materials, or products (living or non-living) held on loan, the owner's written permission should be obtained prior to any transfer and documented in the institutional records.

6.1.7 A Senior Executive of the institution must have final authority for all acquisitions, transfers, and euthanasia.

6.2 Transfer, Euthanasia and Reintroduction Requirements

A. Living animals

6.2.1 Animal transfers must be consistent with the mission of the institution, as reflected in its institutional collection plan, which addresses its exhibition/education, conservation, and/or scientific goals regarding the individual or species.

6.2.2 Animals (wild, feral, and domestic) may be held temporarily for reasons such as assisting governmental agencies or other institutions, rescue and/or rehabilitation, research, propagation or headstarting for reintroduction, or special exhibits.

6.2.3 Any receiving institution must have the necessary expertise and resources to support and provide for the professional care and management of the species, so that the physical, psychological, and social needs of individual animals and species are met.

6.2.4 Any acquisitions, transfers, euthanasia and reintroductions must meet the requirements of all applicable local, state, federal and international laws and regulations.

6.2.5 Any acquisition of free-ranging animals must be done in accordance with all local, state, federal, and international laws and regulations and must not be detrimental to the long-term viability of the species in the wild.

6.2.6 Before acquiring animals from the wild, institutions are encouraged to examine alternative sources including other AAWHC institutions and other regional zoological associations or other non-AAWHC entities.

6.2.7 When acquiring animals from the wild, both the long-term health and welfare impacts on the wild population as well as on individual animals must be considered. In crisis situations, when the survival of a population is at risk, rescue decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate agency and institution.

6.2.8 AAWHC members may assist wildlife agencies by providing homes for animals born in nature if they are incapable of surviving on their own (e.g., in case of orphaned or injured animals) or by euthanizing the animals because they pose a risk to humans or for humane reasons.

6.2.9 AAWHC member institutions that work with commercial vendors that acquire animals from the wild, must perform due diligence to assure the vendors' collection of animals is legal and using ethical practices. Commercial vendors should have conservation and animal welfare goals similar to those of AAWHC institutions.

6.2.10 AAWHC member institutions may acquire animals through public donations and other non-AAWHC entities when it is in the best interest of the animal and/or species.

6.2.11 Animals acquired solely as a food source for animals in the institution's care are not typically accessioned. There may be occasions, however, when it is appropriate to use accessioned animals that exceed population carrying capacity as feeder animals to support other animals.

6.2.12 In transfers to non-AAWHC entities, AAWHC members must perform due diligence and should reasonably ensure that the recipient has the expertise and resources required to properly care for and maintain the animals.

6.2.13 Domestic animals should be transferred in accordance with locally acceptable humane farming practices, including auctions, and must be subject to all relevant laws and regulations.

6.2.14 Animals must not be sent to organizations or individuals that allow canned hunting of the individual animals to take place. These entities (for instance, game ranch operations) should follow appropriate ranch management practices and other conservation minded practices to support population sustainability.

6.2.15 Every loaning institution must annually monitor and document the conditions of any loaned specimen(s) and the ability of the recipient(s) to provide proper care.

6.2.16 No living animals should sent to any entity for research purposes, unless it can be shown that this research is necessary for the conservation of the species. Any research project of this nature must be approved by a research and ethics committee and be in line with the AAWHC Code of Ethics.

6.2.17 Reintroductions and release of animals into the wild must meet all applicable local, state, and international laws and regulations. Any reintroduction requires adherence to best health and veterinary practices to ensure that non-native pathogens are not released into the environment exposing naive wild animals to danger. Reintroductions may be a part of a recovery programme and must be compatible with the IUCN Reintroduction Specialist Group's Reintroduction Guidelines.

6.2.18 Humane euthanasia may be employed for medical reasons to address quality of life issues for animals or to prevent the transmission of disease. AAWHC also recognizes that humane euthanasia may be employed for managing the demographics, genetics, and diversity of animal populations. Humane euthanasia must be performed in accordance with the established euthanasia policy of the institution and follow the recommendations of current AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals).

B. Non-Living Animals and Specimens

6.2.19 AAWHC members should optimize the use and recovery of animal remains. All transfers must meet the requirements of all applicable laws and regulations.

6.2.20 Optimal recovery of animal remains may include performing a complete necropsy including, if possible, histologic evaluation of tissues which should take priority over specimens' use in education/exhibits.

6.2.21 Samples from animal remains should be sent for Biobanking to support future research priorities.

6.2.22 The educational use of non-living animals, parts, materials, and products should be maximized, and their use in scientific projects that provide data for species management and/or conservation must be considered.

6.2.23 Non-living animals, if handled properly to protect the health of the recipient animals, may be utilized as feeder animals to support other animals as deemed appropriate by the institution.

6.2.24 Where possible, AAWHC member institutions should develop agreements for the transfer or donation of non-living animals, parts, materials, products, and specimens and associated documentation, to non-AAWHC entities such as universities and museums. These agreements should be made with entities that have appropriate long-term curation/collections capacity and research protocols, or needs for educational programmes and/or exhibits.

6.3 Support regional conservation breeding programmes

6.3.1 AAWHC should participate in AAWHC supported conservation breeding programmes which serve as the regional collection plan.

6.3.2 AAWHC members should consult with AAWHC ACP Programme Leaders prior to transferring or disposing of remains/samples to determine if existing projects or protocols are in place to optimize use. AAWHC ACP necropsy and sampling protocols should be accommodated.

7. Responsibilities

The Head of the AAWHC member, or their delegated representative, must ensure that their organisation can satisfy the requirements of the AAWHC Population Management Policy, and be able to present evidence of its implementation on request.

AAWHC's Accreditation Programme assessors shall regularly evaluate the AAWHC member's activities in relation to this policy and how they contribute to the member's animal collection policy or strategy.

8. Related Documents

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures and guidelines of AAWHC:

- AAWHC Code of Ethics
- AAWHC Welfare Policy

9. Resources

AVMA Guidelines - (https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/avma-policies/avma-guidelines-euthanasia-animals).

IUCN Survival Commission guidelines on the use of ex-situ management for species conservation

WAZA Strategies

10. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every **five years** by the relevant committee of the AAWHC Board.

11. Approval

This Policy was approved by the AAWHC Board.