

# **ARAV Ethics and Professional Practices Policy (approved 8/8/11)**

## **1. Introduction**

The Association of Reptilian and Amphibian Veterinarians (ARAV) is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct in pursuit of its mission and objectives to (1) advance programs for preventative medicine, husbandry, and scientific research in the field of herpetological medicine and surgery, (2) distribute scientific information relating to the fields of husbandry, herpetological medicine and surgery; and (3) promote the conservation and humane treatment of all reptilian and amphibian species through education, captive breeding and preservation of reptilian and amphibian habitats.

While the ARAV affirms each person's accountability for individual actions, it also recognizes that the shared mission and the shared enterprise of its membership requires a shared set of core values and ethical conduct to which each member of the ARAV must be held accountable. Furthermore, the ARAV acknowledges that an organizational culture grounded in trust is essential to supporting ethical conduct.

The following Code of Conduct is intended to build, maintain and protect that trust, recognizing that each member of the ARAV is responsible for doing his/her part by upholding the highest standards of competence and character.

## **2. Applicability**

The ARAV Ethics Policy applies to all members of the ARAV, including the officers, associate members, active members, student members, veterinary technician members, and student chapters. The ARAV Ethics Policy governs professional conduct performed by an ARAV member.

## **3. Purpose of the Code of Conduct**

The ARAV recognizes that each member attempts to live by his or her own values, beliefs and ethical decision-making processes. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to guide members in decisions and choices that are made in the course of everyday endeavors as ARAV members. In addition each ARAV committee must ensure that its ethics policies are consistent with this ARAV Ethics policy.

## **4. Code of Conduct**

Members will:

- a. Uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in the conduct of herpetological husbandry, medicine, surgery, scientific research, education, and conservation.
- b. Act as good stewards of the resources and information entrusted to our care.

- c. Perform association assigned duties and professional responsibilities in such a manner so as to further the ARAV mission.
- d. Treat fellow members and the public with dignity and respect.
- e. Refrain from discriminating against, harassing or threatening others.
- f. Comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations and professional standards.
- g. Respect the intellectual property rights of others.
- h. Protect human health and safety and the environment in all association operations and activities.
- i. Report wrongdoing to the proper authorities, and cooperate fully with authorized investigations.

#### **5. Investigation of Alleged Violations and Possible Disciplinary Actions**

Alleged violations of ethical misconduct should be directed to the Ethics Officer (Immediate Past-President). If the Immediate Past-President is the subject of the complaint or unavailable, then complaint should be directed to the ARAV Executive Director. The Ethics Officer determines whether the alleged action would, if documented, constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct, and, if appropriate, convenes and chairs a Special Ethics Committee (SEC) to investigate the complaint. Proven violations of the ARAV Ethics Policy may result in disciplinary action as outlined below;

- a. Private written reprimand sent by certified mail (signature required on deliver)
- b. Temporary or permanent loss of membership
- c. Being reported to the relevant regulatory or legal authorities

#### **6. Additional obligations of membership**

- a. **Uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in the conduct of herpetological husbandry, medicine, surgery, scientific research, education, and conservation.**

ARAV Members are expected to perform their professional duties in accordance with institutional, governmental and professional standards while upholding the highest standards of integrity and honesty. Unacceptable violations of integrity include, but are not limited to: (a) plagiarism defined as using another's ideas, writings, research, or intellectual property and representing it as your own original work, (b) falsification or fabrication of data, which includes direct alteration of findings or failing to disclose data that would substantively change the research findings, (c) professional misconduct as

determined by a state, regional or national veterinary board, or other regulatory institution or association (e.g. AVMA, ACZM, ECZM).

**b. Act as good stewards of the resources and information entrusted to our care.**

ARAV property and resources are intended for use in support of the ARAV mission and legitimate purposes. ARAV property and name shall not be used for personal gain or purposes. ARAV Officers are required to maintain the integrity and accuracy of the documents and records for which they are responsible. No member may alter, falsify or destroy any original record or document absent valid authority to do so.

**c. Perform assigned duties and professional responsibilities in such a manner so as to further the ARAV mission.**

ARAV members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of service, research, and integrity. This requirement encompasses both a responsibility to understand and to further organizational missions and goals. Individuals in positions of greater authority bear a greater responsibility for achieving organizational missions and goals in an effective and efficient manner. However, all ARAV members should contribute to the success of the ARAV.

**d. Treat fellow members and the public with dignity and respect.**

ARAV members are required to maintain a professional work environment. Therefore, unprofessional conduct that results in disciplinary action by a regulatory body is likely to be considered unethical conduct for an ARAV member.

**e. Refrain from discriminating against, harassing or threatening others.**

Violence and discrimination (as defined by the local, regional or national laws that have jurisdiction), or harassment (unfounded, repetitive, and behavior which is threatening or disturbing) is unacceptable.

**f. Comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations and professional standards.**

Compliance with laws, rules and regulations governing ARAV members in their workplace and locality is both a legal and an ethical mandate. The risks associated with non-compliance can be significant. Significant risks include loss of reputation, loss of external funding, financial penalties, loss of professional license, and potential criminal prosecutions. Members of the ARAV should seek legal counsel as needed to clarify the laws, rules and regulations impacting their professional duties. Failure to comply with applicable laws, rules and regulations by an ARAV member may result in disciplinary action. ARAV members may be governed by ethical codes or standards of their respective veterinary or professional boards. It is expected that those ARAV members will comply with applicable professional standards in addition to laws, rules and regulations.

**g. Respect the intellectual property rights of others.**

ARAV members associated with the production of intellectual property have the responsibility to comply with the laws and regulations that relate to intellectual property such as copyright laws.

**h. Protect human and animal health, welfare and safety in all ARAV operations and activities.**

The ARAV is strongly committed to protecting the environment, human health and safety, and the health and welfare of reptiles and amphibians in all of its activities. All animal research studies (i.e. not involving client-owned animals) presented at the ARAV conference or published in the Journal of Herpetological Medicine and Surgery must be accompanied by signed statement verifying that all procedures were performed in accordance with applicable animal welfare laws and policies.

**i. Report wrongdoing to the proper authorities, and cooperate fully with authorized investigations.**

All ARAV members have a responsibility to follow the association's bylaws and code of conduct, adhere to applicable laws and regulations, and speak up when identifying misconduct. ARAV members with concerns about possible unethical behavior or noncompliance are encouraged to discreetly speak to a member of the ARAV board.

ARAV members are required to cooperate fully with authorized internal investigations. Failure to cooperate may subject the individual to disciplinary action including termination of membership. Members who are unsure as to the legitimacy of an investigation should consult the Chair of the ARAV Ethics Committee.

## **Procedures for the investigation of alleged ethical misconduct.**

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Alleged violations of ethical misconduct should be directed to the Ethics Officer (Immediate Past-President). If the Immediate Past-President is the subject of the complaint, or unavailable, then the ARAV Executive Director appoints a previous ARAV Past-President to assume the role of Ethics Officer. The role of the Ethics officer shall be to;

1. Inform the President and Secretary that a complaint has been received if they are unaware.
2. Determine whether the alleged activity violates the ARAV Ethics Policy.
  - a. If the alleged activity does not violate the Ethics Policy then the Ethics Officer responds to the complainant within 14 days stating that no ethical misconduct, as determined by the current policy, has occurred (and copies the ARAV President).
  - b. If the alleged activity if established does violate the Ethics Policy then the Ethics Officer informs the complainant within 14 days that a Special Ethics Committee will be formed to fully investigate the matter (as detailed in item 3) with a final decision reported within 60 days (and copies the ARAV Secretary and President) after the hearing.

- 3. Procedure for dealing with alleged complaints that, if proven to be true, would contravene the Ethics Policy;**
- a.** The Ethics officer writes to the respondent that is the subject of the complaint and (i) states the exact nature of the alleged misconduct, and (ii) requests a detailed written rebuttal or explanation within 21 days. The respondent may also supply any other documents and materials that they feel are relevant.
  - b.** The Ethics Officer convenes a SEC to be composed of 4 voting members (the Ethics Officer [Chair], two additional ARAV Past-Presidents, and a current member-at-large), and the ARAV executive director as an ex-officio, non-voting member. Committee member selection should include at least one individual experienced within the area/field in question (e.g. private practice, research, conservation). The committee members must not have close personal or professional ties to either the complainant or the respondent . If such a conflict of interest occurs then the Ethics Officer will seek an appropriate replacement.
  - c.** The letter of complaint, the Ethics Officer's initial response to the complainant, the Ethics Officer's letter to the respondent and their written response (if any), along with any other relevant documentation, should be confidentially circulated to each member of the committee for deliberation.
  - d.** The committee's deliberations must remain confidential, but the Chair may tactfully and with due care and attention question, interview or seek additional documentation from other individuals and sources.
  - e.** The committee members must make a final decision within 28 days of receiving documentation.
  - f.** A majority vote is required for a complaint to be considered proven.
  - g.** If the complaint is upheld, the Ethics Committee makes a decision regarding disciplinary action that may include;
    - a) Private written reprimand.
    - b) Temporary or permanent termination of membership
    - c) Reporting the individual to the relevant professional or legal authorities
- The Ethics officer reports the final decision and recommendations of the Ethics Committee to the President. The Ethics Officer and President then co-sign the formal decision letter that is sent to the respondent.