



AEMV ETHICS AND CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Exotic Mammal Veterinarians (AEMV) is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct in pursuit of its mission and objectives:

1. To advance the care of ferrets, guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, rats, mice, chinchillas, hedgehogs, and other exotic companion mammals
2. To distribute scientific information relating to the fields of husbandry, veterinary medicine and surgery of exotic companion mammals through the *Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine*, the official publication of the Association
3. To distribute scientific information relating to the fields of husbandry, veterinary medicine and surgery of exotic companion mammals through the annual conference of the Association, and
4. To advance scientific research in the field of veterinary medicine for exotic companion mammals

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

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

APPLICABILITY

The AEMV Ethics and Code of Conduct Policy applies to all members of the AEMV, including the officers, all membership types, student chapters, association management company and its employees (if applicable). The AEMV Ethics and Code of Conduct Policy governs professional conduct performed by an AEMV member.

PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The AEMV 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 AEMV members. In addition, each AEMV committee must ensure that its ethics policies are consistent with this AEMV Ethics policy.



CODE OF CONDUCT

- 1. Confidentiality.** The AEMV deeply values the professional reputation of its members and partners and holds that preserving the confidence of its members is critically important so that they may freely discuss the results of their professional work and experiences, trust that their fellow members will not divulge inappropriate information, and openly interact with colleagues without fear of malicious exposure. Deception or any other acts that deliberately compromises this trust and thus the advancement of our profession are unacceptable, and contravenes the mission of AEMV, its annual conference, and various communication tools.
- 2. Uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in the conduct of exotic companion mammal husbandry, medicine, surgery, scientific research, education, and conservation.** AEMV 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. AEMV 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.
- 3. Act as good stewards of the resources and information entrusted to our care.** AEMV property and resources are intended for use in support of the AEMV mission and legitimate purposes. AEMV property and name shall not be used for personal gain or purposes. AEMV 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.
- 4. Perform association assigned duties and professional responsibilities in such a manner so as to further the AEMV mission.** AEMV 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 AEMV members should contribute to the success of the AEMV.
- 5. Treat fellow members and the public with dignity and respect.** AEMV 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 AEMV member.
- 6. 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. AEMV is committed to diversity and inclusion in all aspects of the profession so that we can best serve our members and the animals in their care. We are committed to actively promoting and maintaining diversity and inclusion in our membership, leadership, and organization, and educating our members regarding the value of diversity and inclusion. This commitment embraces the value of our members' varied backgrounds, including but not limited to race; ethnicity; physical and mental abilities; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; parental, marital, or pregnancy status; religious or political beliefs; military or veteran status; and geographic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. AEMV has a zero-tolerance policy both in the association and at the annual conference for harassment in any form regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, age, religion, or political affiliation. Violations by any member or participant at the AEMV Conference may result in expulsion from the association and/or possible ban from future AEMV events.

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

Compliance with laws, rules and regulations governing AEMV 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 AEMV 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 AEMV member may result in disciplinary action. AEMV members may be governed by ethical codes or standards of their respective veterinary or professional boards. It is expected that those AEMV members will comply with applicable professional standards in addition to laws, rules and regulations.

8. Protect human health and safety and the environment in all association operations and activities.

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

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

All AEMV 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. AEMV members with concerns about possible unethical behavior or noncompliance are encouraged to discreetly speak to a member of the AEMV board. AEMV 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 President and Executive Director.



INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGED VIOLATIONS AND POSSIBLE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Any member of AEMV found to be in violation of this policy, as reviewed by the AEMV Board of Directors, may have their membership permanently revoked and be prohibited from attendance at AEMV professional meetings and conferences, or may have other member benefits revoked. Any non-AEMV member in attendance at the annual conference found to be in violation of that trust as reviewed by the AEMV Board of Directors, may be ejected from the conference without refund and prohibited from future conference attendance and membership, and may possibly be the subject of legal action.

Alleged violations of ethical misconduct should be directed to the President and Executive Director which are designated Ethics Officers of AEMV. If the President is the subject of the complaint or unavailable, then the complaint should be directed to the Executive Director only. If the Executive Director is the subject of the complaint or unavailable, then the complaint should be directed to the President only. Once the complaint is filed in writing, the President and Executive Director will determine 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. The role of the Ethics Officers shall be to;

1. Inform the AEMV officers that a complaint has been received if they are unaware.
2. Determine whether the alleged activity violates the AEMV Ethics Policy.
 - a. If the alleged activity does not violate the Ethics Policy then the Ethics Officers respond to the complainant within 14 days stating that no ethical misconduct, as determined by the current policy, has occurred (and copies the AEMV officers).
 - b. If the alleged activity, if established, does violate the Ethics Policy then the Ethics Officers inform 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 AEMV officers) after the hearing.
3. Procedure for dealing with alleged complaints that, if proven to be true, would contravene the Ethics Policy;
 - a. The Ethics Officers write 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 Officers convene a SEC to be composed of four (4) voting members (the Ethics Officers [Chairs], two (2) additional AEMV Past-Presidents, and a current Member-at-Large). The AEMV Executive Director serves as *ex-officio*, non-voting member. Committee member selection should include at least one (1) 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 Officers 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:
 - i. Private written reprimand
 - ii. Temporary or permanent termination of membership
 - iii. Reporting the individual to the relevant professional or legal authority
 - h. The Ethics Officers report the final decision and recommendations of the Ethics Committee to the AEMV officers. The Ethics Officers and President then co-sign the formal decision letter that is sent to the respondent.
 - i. If required, an announcement may be published in JEPM that states that the named individual has been removed from AEMV membership.