




ANIMAL ETHICS POLICY

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1. Preamble

The South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) is a National Facility of the National Research Foundation (NRF).

1.1. Ethical Values

- 1.1.1. NRF-SAIAB recognises that humans have an obligation to respect animals and to appreciate that they are sentient and respond to stress, are sensitive to pain and may remember such experiences.
- 1.1.2. The care and use of animals for scientific purposes must be justified in accordance with the core ethical principles of **Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (the three Rs)**. This means that animals may only be used when there is a convincing scientific justification, when the scientific objectives cannot be achieved using alternative non-animal methods, when the number of animals used is minimised to the lowest number that will achieve the scientific objectives, when the expected benefits (to humans, animals or the environment) outweigh the potential harms in terms of animal suffering and when every effort has been made to reduce animal suffering (including discomfort, pain, fear, distress or lasting harm).
- 1.1.3. Prospective ethical review and approval of animal care and use is a fundamental requirement when dealing with the collection, care or use of animals for any scientific purposes.

1.2. Ethical Standards

- 1.2.1. NRF-SAIAB is committed to high ethical standards with regards to the care and use of animals and complies with the **South African National Standard for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (SANS 10386: latest edition)** produced by the South African Bureau of Standards, as well as the Animals Protection Act (Act 71 of 1962), as minimum standards that must be adhered to in all aspects of animal care and use.
- 1.2.2. NRF-SAIAB is committed to high ethical standards with regards to the care and use of the environment, habitat conservation and the conservation of populations and species.
- 1.2.3. In striving for high ethical standards, NRF-SAIAB may elect, at its discretion, to adopt any additional standards, where relevant and feasible, in part or in whole, including but not limited to stakeholder norms, international publishing guidelines, recommendations of the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC), etc.
- 1.2.4. The care and use of animals for scientific purposes must comply with relevant national legislation and regulations, as well as relevant international laws and treaties.

1.3. Scientific Uses of Animals

The various uses of animals for scientific purposes (including the care of such animals) undertaken by NRF-SAIAB personnel and other relevant persons, as defined in this policy, are complex and may include, *inter alia*, research on invertebrates (e.g., cephalopods, gastropods and bivalves) and vertebrates (e.g., fishes, amphibians and reptiles), as follows:

- 1.3.1. Collection of animals as museum specimens or for reference collections
- 1.3.2. Collection of animals for biodiversity census
- 1.3.3. Collection of animals for ecological studies, including the subsequent examination of these animals whole or in part for biological analyses
- 1.3.4. Experimentation on animals under laboratory conditions
- 1.3.5. Research on free-living and captive animals
- 1.3.6. Teaching and training using animals
- 1.3.7. Other scientific purposes

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the care and use of animals for scientific purposes aligns with NRF-SAIAB's high ethical values and ethical standards, as outlined above; and to distinguish NRF-SAIAB as a leader in the field of the ethical care and use of aquatic animals for scientific purposes.

3. Definition of Terms

3.1. *Animal*

Means any live non-human vertebrate or invertebrate, including their fertilised eggs, embryos and fetuses.

3.2. *Scientific purposes*

Means the care and use of animals for research, teaching, training, testing, validation, field trials, the production of biological substances, environmental or observational studies (including for audio or visual recordings); to advance knowledge, to test a hypothesis, to supply or test a product, to provide organs or tissues or cells or gametes for scientific purposes, to act as a host, to teach procedures or techniques using animals, or to impart or demonstrate existing knowledge.

4. Scope

This policy applies to the following animals and people:

4.1. *Animals*

- 4.1.1. This policy applies to the care and use of all non-human animals for all scientific purposes, as defined in this policy.
- 4.1.2. Specifically, the policy applies to:
 - 4.1.2.1.all cases where live animals will be cared for or used for scientific purposes; and

- 4.1.2.2.all cases where live animals will be killed specifically to be used for scientific purposes, including for use in collections.
- 4.1.3. At NRF-SAIAB's discretion, this policy's scope may be extended to include the use of collections, specimens, samples, tissues, cells, DNA or other materials from dead animals.

4.2. People

- 4.2.1. As a National Facility, NRF-SAIAB both undertakes and, through equipment provision, facilitates research. This results in a range of people with whom NRF-SAIAB interacts, each with different levels of autonomy from NRF-SAIAB and, in some cases, their own primary employer or University. This policy applies to the following categories of people:
 - 4.2.1.1. Persons who are salaried and directly managed by NRF-SAIAB.
 - 4.2.1.2. Students from educational institutions who are involved in collaborative projects with NRF-SAIAB and/or its scientists.
 - 4.2.1.3. Research Associates (RAs) of NRF-SAIAB.
 - 4.2.1.4. Persons who make use of any of the NRF-SAIAB collections, libraries, laboratories, equipment, infrastructure, ships or any other NRF-SAIAB property or resources.
 - 4.2.1.5. Persons who publish in NRF-SAIAB's name at NRF-SAIAB or elsewhere.
 - 4.2.1.6. Any other person who uses animals for scientific purposes at NRF-SAIAB.
- 4.2.2. The NRF-SAIAB Animal Ethics Committee shall define Standard Operating Procedures in order to ensure appropriate ethical standards and levels of ethical oversight for the projects and activities of all the above categories of people, including the methodology to be used for the review, approval and monitoring processes of these studies and activities. These SOPs will include appropriate oversight ranging from direct review, approval and monitoring through NRF-SAIAB's AEC to acceptance of AEC approvals from other institutions.

5. Policy Principles & Implementation

5.1. The NRF-SAIAB Institutional Official

- 5.1.1.1. In compliance with the SANS 10386 (latest edition), NRF-SAIAB has appointed an institutional official, i.e., the person who, as a representative of senior administration, bears ultimate responsibility for the animal care and use programme, and is responsible for resource planning and ensuring alignment of programme goals with the mission of the Institution.
- 5.1.1.2. The NRF-SAIAB Institutional Official is the NRF-SAIAB Managing Director.

5.2. The NRF-SAIAB Animal Ethics Committee (AEC)

5.2.1.1. In order to comply with the minimum standards as set by the SANS 10386 (latest edition), NRF-SAIAB has appointed an institutional Animal Ethics Committee (AEC).

5.2.1.2. The NRF-SAIAB AEC reports directly to the NRF-SAIAB Institutional Official.

5.2.1.3. The composition, responsibilities and functioning of the NRF-SAIAB AEC are described in the committee's Terms of Reference.

5.3. Ethical Review, Approval and Monitoring

5.3.1. The NRF-SAIAB AEC is responsible for the oversight of the entire institutional animal care and use programme, including the review, approval and monitoring of all projects and activities that involve the care or use of animals for scientific purposes, as defined in this policy.

5.3.2. NRF-SAIAB requires prior written ethical approval from the NRF-SAIAB AEC, before any projects or activities may be initiated that relate to the care or use of animals for scientific purposes, as defined in this policy.

5.3.3. Retrospective ethical review and approval or clearance is not permitted.

5.3.4. Ethical approval is linked to a specific Principal Investigator (PI) and falls away when the PI leaves the project before it is completed. It must be ensured that an application for an amendment to the approved protocol is made, when a new PI is to be appointed.

5.3.5. Researchers should keep in mind the requirement of prior ethics review and clearance, when planning the timeframes for their research.

5.4. Permits

5.4.1. Permits must be obtained from the relevant authority prior to the initiation of any relevant project or activity.

5.4.2. The details of all relevant permits shall be provided in the AEC application.

5.4.3. If projects or activities are performed in partnership with external (i.e., non-SAIAB) persons on their permit, the details of that permit must be provided in the AEC application.

5.4.4. No living organism may be collected without permits issued by the relevant authority.

5.4.5. Permits must be carried by relevant persons for the duration of the project or activity.

5.4.6. In all cases, permit requirements and stipulations must be adhered to.

5.5. Breaches and Violations

5.5.1. Breaches or violations of NRF-SAIAB policies (including this policy), codes, conditions for ethical approval of projects or activities by NRF-SAIAB AEC:

- 5.5.1.1. Persons who are salaried by NRF-SAIAB will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant NRF-SAIAB disciplinary procedures.
- 5.5.1.2. Students will be referred to their respective university/universities for disciplinary action.
- 5.5.1.3. Research Associates will have their research agreements with NRF-SAIAB reviewed.
- 5.5.1.4. Other persons will be dealt with as defined by NRF-SAIAB Managing Director.

6. Accountability

6.1. *The NRF-SAIAB Institutional Official*

- 6.1.1. The NRF-SAIAB Managing Director, in his/her capacity as Institutional Official, in consultation with the governance structures of NRF-SAIAB, is responsible for the implementation of the Animal Ethics Policy and for ensuring compliance with relevant standards.
- 6.1.2. The NRF-SAIAB Managing Director bears ultimate responsibility for the animal care and use programme and is responsible for resource planning and ensuring alignment of programme goals with the institutional mission.
- 6.1.3. The NRF-SAIAB Managing Director shall duly appoint an Animal Ethics Committee, as per this policy.

6.2. *The NRF-SAIAB Animal Ethics Committee*

- 6.2.1. The NRF-SAIAB AEC are responsible for the implementation of the Animal Ethics Policy, as per the stipulations in the committee's Terms of Reference.

6.3. *Other Persons to whom this Policy Applies*

- 6.3.1. All persons included in the scope of this policy are responsible for its implementation within their respective areas of activity.
- 6.3.2. All persons who care for and/or use animals for scientific purposes, are responsible in their personal capacity for assuring that the animals are afforded the highest levels of welfare and ethical treatment.
- 6.3.3. All persons who care for and/or use animals for scientific purposes, have direct ethical and legal responsibility for all matters relating to the welfare of the animals used. The ultimate responsibility for any AEC-approved project or activity lies with the Principal Investigator.
- 6.3.4. Research must be carried out with integrity in a scholarly and responsible manner.
- 6.3.5. Researchers must recognise and meet their responsibility for:
 - 6.3.5.1. Adherence to the applicable NRF-SAIAB policies and standard operating procedures.
 - 6.3.5.2. Ongoing compliance with requirements of NRF-SAIAB Animal Ethics Committee.
 - 6.3.5.3. The appropriate design, methodology and execution of their research.

- 6.3.5.4.Planning so that the research findings have a high degree of validity.
- 6.3.5.5.Appropriate management of potential conflicts of interest.
- 6.3.5.6.In reporting findings, adhering to the principles of honesty, clarity, comprehensiveness, accountability and openness to public scrutiny.
- 6.3.6. The governing professional codes should be acknowledged and honoured when conducting research.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

The NRF-SAIAB Managing Director is responsible for conducting a comprehensive review of this policy at a minimum of every three years, or more frequently as required, in order to stay current with applicable legislation, ethical standards and NRF-SAIAB strategic objectives.

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