

South African Association of Reptile Keepers (SAARK) Code of Conduct

This code aims to promote ethical behaviour, encourage responsible reptile keeping, and outline standards for all members.

1. Purpose

This Code of Conduct serves as a guideline to ensure the welfare of reptiles, promote responsible pet ownership, and uphold the reputation of the South African Association of Reptile Keepers (SAARK). All members are expected to comply with these standards, contributing positively to the reptile-keeping community in South Africa.

2. Scope

This code applies to all SAARK members and affiliates, including reptile keepers, breeders, sellers, educators, and anyone associated with SAARK. Non-compliance with these guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including suspension or termination of membership.

3. Code of Conduct

3.1 Animal Welfare

- 3.1.1 Ensure that all reptiles are kept in enclosures that meet their specific environmental, nutritional, and social needs.
- 3.1.2 Maintain proper hygiene, regular health checks, and veterinary care when necessary.
- 3.1.3 Avoid and report any form of neglect, abuse, or cruelty toward reptiles.

3.2 Ethical Breeding and Sales

- 3.2.1 Abide by ethical breeding practices that prioritise the health and genetic integrity of reptiles.
- 3.2.2 Only sell animals that are healthy, adequately housed, and legally obtained.
- 3.2.3 Provide buyers with accurate information about the reptile's care requirements and ensure they have the understanding to provide appropriate care.

3.3 Education and Public Conduct

- 3.3.1 Strive to educate the public on responsible reptile ownership and environmental conservation.
- 3.3.2 Avoid any public display or behaviour that may harm the reputation of SAARK or the reptile-keeping community.
- 3.3.3 Seek permission (and necessary permits) for and adhere to ethical standards during public demonstrations involving live animals.

3.4 Legal Compliance

- 3.4.1 Follow all applicable local, provincial, and national laws regarding reptile ownership, breeding, and sales.
- 3.4.2 Refrain from acquiring, selling, or possessing any prohibited species, and comply with regulations on non-native and invasive species.

3.5 Respect and Integrity

- 3.5.1 Treat fellow members, associates, and the public with respect and professionalism.
- 3.5.2 Avoid actions or statements that could harm or disrespect others in the reptile-keeping community.
- 3.5.3 Respect intellectual property rights and refrain from using any SAARK branding or materials for unauthorized purposes.

4. Disciplinary Procedures

4.1 Reporting Misconduct

Members are encouraged to report any breaches of the Code of Conduct directly to the SAARK Ethics Committee. All reports will be treated confidentially and addressed promptly.

4.2 Investigation Process

An investigation will be conducted for each reported breach to determine the facts and context.

The member involved will be given an opportunity to respond to the allegations before a final decision is made.

4.3 Disciplinary Actions

Based on the severity of the breach, disciplinary actions may include:

4.3.1 Verbal or written warnings

4.3.2 Temporary suspension from SAARK activities or events

4.3.3 Termination of membership

4.3.4 Legal action in cases involving unlawful activity

4.4 Appeals Process

Members may appeal disciplinary decisions by submitting a written request to the SAARK Ethics Committee within 14 days of the decision.

The Committee will review the appeal and issue a final ruling.

5. Acknowledgment

By joining SAARK, members agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct. Violations of the code undermine the welfare of reptiles, the integrity of the association, and the reputation of the reptile-keeping community as a whole.