

AQUARIUM AND POND KEEPER'S CODE OF CONDUCT

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1. Introduction and objectives

This Code of Conduct is designed not as a set of rules, but as a voluntary ethical guide for all hobbyists, collectors, breeders, importers and professional Aquarium and Pond keepers in Australia, for the responsible ownership, breeding, collection, keeping & disposal of fish, plants, invertebrates, crustaceans, and other aquarium and pond life, along with the water they live in, in order to optimise their wellbeing and prevent the possibility of pest species or disease spreading into our native habitats.

It has been a collection of information written by members of Aquarium Societies, Plant Study Groups and on-line Aquarium forums. This constitutes the “we”, however we also recognise that there may be differing opinions and we can change the suggested code of conduct easily.

2. Fish and the Law

Each State and Territory has its own Laws. Ignorance of the Law is no defence against prosecution. It is strongly recommended that people check their local laws before:

- Importing livestock or plants from interstate.
- Collecting from the wild.
- Buying or obtaining species that may require a permit.
- Disposing of species (particularly frogs) into the wild.

This information can usually be found either on the relevant State or Territory Government internet website, or at the State and Federal Departments that cover natural resource management, agriculture and fisheries.

We believe that any person should be able to keep any aquatic life they choose as long as it is collected & kept in an ethical manner free of disease and in a place where it is

impossible for that life to escape control. We will continue to lobby politicians and Law makers to make this possible for responsible keepers of aquatic life forms to achieve that objective.

3. Ethics

It is recommended that people:

Keeping

1. Acquire aquatic life Aquarium and pond subjects from a reputable source, a shop or breeder with a good reputation for selling healthy strong aquatic organisms.
2. Provide the correct diet, water quality, water movement and temperature for that species.
3. Consider the behaviour and compatibility of fishes and other species when establishing a community in an aquarium or pond.
4. Provide shelter in the form of places to hide for those species that require cover.
5. Provide the correct photoperiod for species in their care.
6. Take care with the fishes in their control so there are no accidental translocations (ie. movements or escapes).
7. Construct ponds with screened overflows and consideration for flooding.
8. If building pond in an area prone to flooding use only local aquatic life forms to prevent translocations of aquatic life.

Breeding

1. Ensure that hybrids are not produced or distributed as a real species.
2. Ensure that whenever possible they breed to maintain the genetic purity of populations.
3. Ensure that genetic deformities that will affect the wellbeing or lifespan of the fish are not knowingly passed onto the next generation.

Euthanasia & Disposal

1. Unwanted specimens are traded to others in accordance with the laws of the State or Territory in whose jurisdiction the fishes reside and the jurisdiction of the receiving State or Territory.
2. Euthanasia of fishes is carried out in accordance with the procedures documented by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).
3. Any fish that dies or is euthanased is disposed of in a manner that prevents the survival of any disease causing organisms associated with that fish.
4. Any repatriation of a species into a water body is only undertaken with the supervision and approval of authorised government fisheries personnel.

The humane euthanasia of fish is a subject that creates considerable debate. One method that is accepted by university ethics committees (in compliance with National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines) is an overdose of anaesthetic until all signs of movement have ceased, then the head is severed with a sharp knife or if the fish is required whole by a Museum or other institution it can be immersed in an ice slurry instead. An inexpensive anaesthetic that is freely available from most chemist shops is Clove Oil.

Transport

We recommend that:

1. Fish are transported in a manner that ensures safe arrival of the specimens at their intended destination.
2. The air transport of fishes complies with the requirements of the International Air Transport Association (IATA).
3. The fishes are transported in a manner that will not allow any to escape into any other water body.

We are strongly opposed to translocation of fish species.

FISH TRANSLOCATION in this context means the transport of live fish from one natural water body and their release into another natural water body in accordance with the definitions in the "National policy on the translocation of Fishes". It is possible that the translocated species, even though it may be native, might become a pest species in the new water body.

We strongly oppose the release back into any habitat, even the original sampling site, of any species native or exotic, after it has been kept in an aquarium or pond due to the possibility of disease introduction (bacteria, virus, plant or invertebrate) into an area that is free of those organisms.

Collection of native Aquatic Life

1. State or Territory and Federal laws on collection are checked before commencing, including both sites for collection and the species being collected (whether they are protected), along with any other relevant laws.
2. Even if there is no law preventing collection of a particular species, if its population is threatened in the area it is being collected from, or in general, that should be taken into consideration when making the decision to collect, particularly if collection is not for the purpose of breeding.
3. Permission is sought before sampling fishes on private property.
4. Permits are obtained before sampling fishes in National Parks.
5. Species status is known before taking numbers of a particular species and only minimum necessary numbers are taken for the required purpose.

6. Unusual findings are reported to, and specimens lodged with State Museums.
7. Non-destructive sampling methods are utilised to ensure minimal, if any, impact on the fish and their habitat.
8. Nets and other sampling equipment are washed and sterilised between sampling sites to prevent any translocation of organisms between drainages.
9. Species sampled are bred in captivity and distributed to other keepers, interested individuals and institutions.
10. Support the aquaculture of Australian native species for food and ornamental purposes.
11. People make themselves aware of any community related water activity in any area they wish to collect Aquatic Life. Landcare groups may wish to know what aquatic life is in their area.

We encourage the sustainable use of natural resources in a manner that encourages landowners to conserve the natural habitats on their properties.

We urge people to consider the latest worldwide trend of making natural resources valuable to the landowner. If property owners have natural habitats on their land which can be used in a sustainable manner, then they are more likely to preserve those habitats in an undeveloped state for they are a resource with value.

4. Health and Safety

Although many people may not consider aquarium and pond keeping as a dangerous occupation, there are issues to be considered, such as:

- Electricity, particularly close to water.
- Water, particularly on slippery floors.
- Water with children, possibility of drowning in ponds.
- Broken glass.
- Infections, which can be exacerbated or transmitted more readily through water, such as Piscine Tuberculosis
- Species with strong or venomous spines, sharp teeth and a nasty disposition.

5. Bio-security

1. Agree to comply with the current importation laws.
 2. Strongly oppose any illegal imports into Australia, and recognise the threat this poses with possible pest and disease introduction that will threaten native aquatic life, ornamental Aquarium Industry and other industries that rely on healthy natural environments in Australia such as commercial Fisheries and Aquaculture.
 3. If we disagree with a law, we propose to apply to change the law through the proper channels using all aspects of the administrative and democratic processes.
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6. A guide for younger Aquarium & pond keepers with ethical questions

When setting up your first pond or aquarium, there are some things to find out about and consider first. The basics include:

1. What kind of aquatic life you want to keep, and whether the aquarium or pond you have is suitable (the right size and with enough filtration) for the life forms.
2. Whether the aquatic life you want to keep will go together – many won't, and will kill each other eventually. <http://www.aqadvisor.com/> will guide you.
3. Cycle the tank or pond properly before adding all of your new fish. Read up about the nitrogen cycle, and ammonia, nitrites, nitrates.
4. Find out what kind of place will make your aquatic life happy – do they require fast or slow water, somewhere to hide? Give them that, and you'll have a happy aquatic life community to reward you. Google your aquatic life to find out what they need.
5. If you don't want your aquatic life anymore, where can you get them a new home? Many local Aquarium stores will take them from you, if a friend doesn't want them, or you can put an advertisement on Gumtree, or a fish forum, if you're a member. Don't release them into a river – they probably won't live, and if they do, they might spread disease, and may cause problems for the native environment.
6. If your aquatic life is unwell seek help from experienced keepers. There are many internet forums where you can ask for help, or you could ask at your local fish store, or at your vets.
7. If you need to kill your aquatic life (if it gets really sick, and you can't cure it), the best way is in the Euthanasia section above.

7. Intended uses of a Code of Conduct

A voluntary code for all keepers, breeders and commercial members of the aquarium or pond trade to articulate our shared values and practices.

To help generate a positive attitude among the people who are not involved with the Aquarium and Pond, Trade or Hobby. People may have developed a negative attitude toward the trade and hobby by past problems perceived to have been created by the Aquarium and Pond keepers.

To help demonstrate to Aquatic environment stake holders and other interested parties that there are ways to keep aquaria and ponds ethically without undue risk to other aquatic resources.

To act as a guide for young people and help them with their passion for learning about aquatic life. A guide to keeping their aquatic subjects without causing undue problems they may not have considered.

8. References

AqAdvisor – stocking advice
<http://www.aqadvisor.com/>

Aquariumlife forum
<http://www.aquariumlife.com.au>

ANGFA – Code of Conduct
<http://www.angfa.org.au/angfa-coc.html>

BMDCSA – Code of Ethics
<http://bmdcsa.com/coe.html>

FASA – Code of Ethics
<http://users.chariot.net.au/~gccfsa/Code.html>

Amended 24 April 2011
