

National Reptile Improvement Plan

Best Management Practices for Reptile Trade and Hobby

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PIJAC Reptile/Amphibian Committee -- Best Management Practices, Standards Development and Review

These draft Best Management Practices are to be used on a national basis as part of a voluntary plan establishing standards of husbandry, care and handling of reptiles and amphibians and to minimize the risk of the introduction of ticks and other designated organisms into the United States and to minimize the likelihood of their spread among the states.

These standards set forth fundamental procedures to be adopted by National Reptile Improvement Plan (NRIP) Participants; they also contain elements for each Plan Participant to be included in Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) designed and customized by the Plan Participant. SOPs shall be specifically designed to cover operations unique to the Plan Participant's facility and type of animals routinely handled. The SOPs will incorporate relevant parts of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) and address with greater specificity standards and procedures appropriate to meet the goals and objectives of the NRIP.

The NRIP Standards will be used in a series of test situations to verify their effectiveness and practicality. The testing process involves feedback that will be reviewed at a future PIJAC Subcommittee workshop. Suggested amendments should be forwarded to the Subcommittee for their review.

The initial draft standards were prepared by the Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee of the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC). This draft reflects comments received during an initial meeting in Daytona Beach, Florida on August 12, 2000, and subsequent meetings and communications, both written and oral, from a variety of reptile dealers, reptile veterinarians, commercial breeders, hobby breeders, and retailers in Arizona, Florida, Colorado, California, and Illinois.

The Plan, adopted June 16, 2003, reflects input received during multiple meetings held between August 2000 and June 2003. A draft document submitted in August 2002 to the Florida Department of Agriculture and the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service of the United States Department of Agriculture and their comments were incorporated in subsequent drafts. The Plan underwent 14 separate drafts prior to its adoption.

Amendments Issued Since Publication		
Amd. No	Date	Description Of Amendment

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Foreword

The trade in field-collected (native and non-native species) and captive-bred and reared reptile and amphibian species involves a variety of activities, including import/export, captive breeding, wholesale distribution, sale and ownership by individuals, zoological organizations and research institutions. The trade involves international and domestic movement of a wide variety of species of turtles, tortoises, lizards, snakes, and other reptilians and amphibians. These species have commercial, recreational, cultural and aesthetic values to diverse components of society.

The movement of such animals, if not properly managed, can cause the dispersal of ticks or other unwanted ectoparasites that accompany the specimens (field-collected or captive-bred and reared) being traded or introduced into captive breeding facilities. Absent the establishment of Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures, facilities engaged in import, export, distribution or captive breeding may unintentionally cause the introduction and spread of unwanted ectoparasites that may be injurious to the host animals, other animals within or outside the facility, humans, or the environment.

It is well recognized that interest in the reptile trade and hobby is increasing and it provides a livelihood and enjoyment for many commercial businesses, and hobby and individual pet owners. Concerned members of the reptile trade and the reptile hobby recognize that the responsible management of reptilian and amphibian species benefits not only their activities, but also a far broader stakeholder community, such as agriculture and public health.

To meet these goals, a group of concerned members of the reptile/amphibian trade and hobby met with representatives of the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Florida's Department of Agriculture to ascertain how myriad stakeholders could work cooperatively to minimize the risk of Reptile-associated tick infestations, which are potentially injurious to agriculture and animal and human health, to increase public education and awareness, to implement voluntary standards, and to coordinate activities with appropriate regulatory agencies.

Following that meeting, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) convened meetings in Florida to evaluate the feasibility of developing Best Management Practices (BMP) that would, among other things, provide a set of standards, most of which would be included in written Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) developed by individual participants as part of a voluntary compliance program that is designed to minimize the risk of the introduction of unwanted parasites or other identified organisms into the United States or the dispersal of such organisms among the states. Each participant would adopt written SOPs customized to meet the specific operations of each facility to ensure that the Plan's Best Management Practices have been implemented and are followed.

The National Reptile Improvement Plan (NRIP), a program to improve practices of persons involved in importation, sale or captive breeding of reptilian and amphibian species, was designed by individuals with expertise in importing, captive breeding, retail store operations, entomology, and veterinary medicine. The Plan is aimed at minimizing the risk of international or interstate movement of reptiles causing harm to the reptiles, livestock or the environment. Participation in the Plan is voluntary and available for persons that meet or exceed NRIP standards. The NRIP is designed to provide a cooperative Industry-State-Federal program that is a self-directed, self-regulated program that includes adoption and implementation of Best Management Practices, a quality assurance program, and independent verification through periodic inspections. While the Plan involves self-regulation, it works in cooperation with and under the guidance and approval of USDA-APHIS-VS and appropriate state authorities.

NRIP Structure:

- NRIP is not a private business. It is established as a function of a subcommittee of PIJAC, a non-profit trade association representing all segments of the pet industry in the United States. NRIP is designed to be of benefit to those involved with reptiles while at the same time safeguarding American livestock and agriculture.
- Initially, PIJAC will provide the requisite infrastructure and staff support. Depending on NRIP's acceptance and areas of activity, PIJAC may establish a separate corporate entity to provide the services associated with implementation and maintenance of the Plan.
- Every plan participant shall be required to obtain all necessary permits, licenses, or other authorizations required by federal and/or state law.
- Participation in the Plan is voluntary and open to any person, business or other entity that desires to participate and comply with the standards set forth herein.
- NRIP will meet annually for discourse, inquiry and investigation into better methods of handling, shipping, housing and husbandry.

As stated above, NRIP Accreditation is based upon a Plan Participant's adherence to the standards contained in the program. Accreditation is achieved through self-regulation and inspection that may be verified by a veterinarian, or a state department of agriculture and/or the United States Department of Agriculture veterinarian with an understanding in the handling and care of reptiles and amphibians.

The NRIP performance-based standards are prepared under the direction of the Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee of the Governmental Affairs Committee of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council. These standards are subject to a broad and inclusive stakeholder review and consultation process both within and outside of PIJAC's membership.

Introduction

NRIP Best Management Practices (BMPs) are produced through a consultative process with representatives of the reptile industry, reptile hobby community, reptile veterinarians, entomologists and the United States Department of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture of the State of Florida. The development of the NRIP BMPs is the first step in the process for developing accepted voluntary compliance standards.

The NRIP BMPs cover import, export, wholesale distribution, captive breeding operations and contain recommended Best Management Standards involving care and handling, husbandry and record keeping. NRIP will publish sample templates for Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to assist Plan Participants in the writing of their SOPs that must be specific to their operations. Due to the diversity of operations and species involved, it is not practical to include in the BMPs detailed specifications for each species or the various types of operation that might qualify under a broad-based plan.

Implementation of the Plan involves two options. The first option involves acceptance of a Code of Conduct. The second option involves facility accreditation for certain types of operations as well as acceptance of the Code of Conduct.

Scope

The NRIP addresses:

- Reptiles and Amphibians: Live species of all genera of reptiles and amphibians common to the pet trade, whether acquired through field-collecting or captive breeding for the pet trade, hobby, zoological parks, or research institutions.
- Facility Management: A set of standards applicable to all facilities housing and maintaining reptiles and amphibians.
- Disease Prevention: The inspection of animals including the removal and collection of ticks to minimize the risk of the introduction of ectoparasites adverse to livestock into the United States. The Plan will also address protocols for minimizing the incidence of Reptile-associated Salmonella.
- Handling and Husbandry: The activities and processes involved in maintenance and care of reptiles in Plan Participant's facilities, including intake examination and inspection, and periodic facility inspections to minimize the risk of tick-infestation in an import facility, breeding facility, wholesale/distribution facility, zoological facility or research institution.
- Compliance Monitoring and Quality Assurance: A set of procedures for documenting Plan compliance, including periodic facility inspections to ascertain if the BMPs and SOPs are in place and being implemented.

Definitions

- (1) The term "**amphibian**" means any living specimens of the following taxonomic groups belonging to the class *Amphibia*:
 - (a) Frogs
 - (b) Toads
 - (c) Salamanders/Newts
 - (d) Caecilians

- (2) The term **“area”** means a location within a facility, such as a room, compound, or space designated for housing and maintaining specimens whether for isolation, temporary or permanent housing.
- (3) The term **“best management practices”** means standards for operating and maintaining a facility utilized for housing and/or breeding reptiles and amphibians.
- (4) The term **“verifying organization”** means the third-party independent entity that inspects and assesses other organizations’ or individuals’ compliance with the NRIP standards.
- (5) The term **“commercial breeder”** means persons engaged in business of breeding reptile or amphibian species in closed or open facility and who keeps such animals for sale, resale, trade or barter.
- (6) The term **“disaster plan”** means a written emergency management plan for securing and handling the animals in the event of a disaster, such as a earthquake, hurricane, tornado, or flood.
- (7) The term **“disinfect”** means to use a chemical agent on a substance to destroy pathogenic microorganisms. Disinfection takes a disinfected surface and adds a chemical agent to kill microorganisms. The surfaces must be clean for the disinfectant action to work. When using the disinfectant as the cleaner, the surface must be scrubbed to remove organic debris, wiped clean, and then the disinfectant needs to be re-applied. It works best if it is allowed to stay in place on the cleaned surface for ten minutes. Then the surface is rinsed thoroughly to remove all of the disinfectant. If not adequately rinsed off, residual disinfectant can be irritating to animals exposed to it. Also, if used in too high of strength, in addition to possible toxicity, it is more difficult to rinse off.
- (8) The term **“exporter”** means all suppliers of reptiles who export such animals from the United States.
- (9) The term **“facility”** means buildings or portions of buildings, yards, pens and other areas at a single location in which any animals are kept, handled, or transported for the purpose of breeding, holding, resale.
- (10) The term **“facility management”** means the integrated process of information gathering, analysis, planning, decision-making, allocation of resources, plan implementation and formulation, and enforcement of NRIP goals and objectives. In practice, this means management’s ensuring operation and management of a facility in compliance with the BMPs set forth herein.
- (11) The term **“feeders or feeder animals”** means those animals, such as feeder rats, mice and crickets that are purposely bred and reared for food for reptiles and other animals.
- (12) The term **“foreign supplier”** means all suppliers located outside of the United States and who exports reptiles and amphibians exporting such animals to persons in the United States.
- (13) The term **“hobbyist”** means persons who possess and maintain reptiles or amphibians for their personal pleasure.
- (14) The term **“importer”** means any person who is the first person opening and unpacking the shipping container following release by Federal authorities of a shipment from outside of the United States.
- (15) The term **“inspection”** means documented qualitative or quantitative parameters that state acceptable process controls and standards for examining reptiles for the presence of ticks or other listed organisms that accompany the host animal. An inspection also includes process controls to ensure that the Best Management Practices and Standard Operating Procedures have been implemented and are being complied with at Plan Participant facilities.

- (16) The term **“introduced” or “introduction”** means deliberately releasing into a natural environment in a free-living state.
- (17) The term **“isolation”** means placing all new arrivals into an area or containment system that separates new arrivals from specimens already located at the facility, not currently under isolation, to adequately control or contain modes of movement of ticks. Such area or confinement system shall be designed to prevent the movement, escape or other transfer of the specimen(s) or ticks that arrived with the specimen(s), until the specimen(s) have been determined to be tick free.
- (18) The term **“isolation area,” or “isolation system,” or “isolation enclosure”** means containment areas, systems, or enclosures, such as tubs, cages, trays, pens, terrariums or sealed containers, that provide for a contained environment that prevents the escape of the specimen(s) or any ticks that may accompany the animals. For containment devices with open tops, the walls shall be made to prevent ticks from climbing out. Barriers such as petroleum jelly bands near the lip of the container, or barriers saturated, in an acaricide may be used.
- (19) The term **“management plan”** means a document prepared by the Plan Participant that incorporates the Best Management Practices and provides for the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures to be implemented and utilized as long as the Plan Participant is an active participant.
- (20) The term **“NRIP”** means the National Reptile Improvement Plan.
- (21) The term **“operator”** means a person engaged in the activity of an importer, exporter, wholesale distributor, commercial breeder, hobby breeder or a pet store, who operates a facility for receiving and/or captive breeding reptile and amphibian species
- (22) The term **“person”** means an individual, corporation, partnership, business trust, estate, trust, joint venture, association, or other legal entity engaged in the activity of importing, exporting or breeding of reptiles and amphibians.
- (23) The term **“pet retailer”** means any person acquiring reptiles and amphibians for sale at retail through a physical facility where animals are displayed and made available to the public. Pet retailer does not mean swap meets, flea markets, trade shows, or other temporary public sales events.
- (24) The term **“physical exam”** means the tactual and visual examination of an individual patient to assess any abnormalities; usually includes observation of the ears, eyes, oral cavity, skin, and palpation of the limbs and abdomen.
- (25) The term **“PIJAC”** means the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council.
- (26) The term **“Plan Administrator”** means the person or organization designated with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation and administration of the Plan, including the processing of applications of prospective Plan Participants.
- (27) The term **“Plan Participant”** means any person importing, captive breeding, removing native species from the wild, or otherwise handling or dealing with reptiles upon demonstration, to the satisfaction of the Accreditation Board, that the facility, personnel, and practices of the Plan Participant meet or exceed the BMPs and that the Plan Participant or Registrant is prepared to operate and maintain, or is operating and maintaining its operations in conformance with the NRIP.
- (28) The term **“primary enclosure”** means any cage, structure or container, which limits the physical movement of an animal contained therein.

- (29)The term **“registrant”** means any person importing, captive breeding, removing native species from the wild, or otherwise handling or dealing with reptiles and amphibians and who has subscribed, and certified adherence to the Code of Conduct of the NRIP and has applied for NRIP registration.
- (30)The term **“reptile”** means any living specimens of the following taxonomic groups belonging to the class *Reptilia*:
- (a) Snakes
 - (b) Lizards
 - (c) Turtles and Tortoises
 - (d) Crocodilians.
- (31)The term **“Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)”** means written operating procedures designed for operating the Plan Participant’s facility and shall include standards contained in the BMPs as well as detailed and specific standards designed by the Plan Participant to meet certain minimum requirements called for in the BMPs, such as species-specific standards for intake inspection/examination and routine inspections, husbandry, housing, sanitation and veterinary care.
- (32)The term **“sterilize”** means destruction of all living microorganisms through steam, chemical agents, heavy metals, ethylene oxide, heat, radiation, or ultraviolet light. Sterilization eliminates all live microorganisms, and must be aseptically maintained to prevent repopulation by microorganisms.
- (33) The term **“tick”** means a small external parasite of the suborder *Ixodides* within the order *Parasitiformes*, subclass *Acari* which attaches itself to the host only with its mouth parts and feeds on blood.
- (34) The term **“venomous animal”** means any snake of the following Taxonomic groups: *Elapidae* (cobras, mambas, coral snakes, kraits and relatives); *Viperidae* (adders and vipers); *Crotalidae* (rattlesnakes, copperheads, palm pit vipers); *Atractaspis* (mole vipers, burrowing asps); *Hydrophiidae* (sea snakes); rear-fanged snakes (boomslang – *Dispholidus*), African vine or twig snakes (*Thelotornis*), *Rhabdophis*, and mangrove and cat snakes (*Boiga*); and any lizard of the genus *Heloderma*.
- (35) The term **“veterinarian”** means an individual licensed to practice veterinary medicine in the state where the accredited facility is located.
- (36)The term **“visual exam”** means visual observation of an individual or a group to assess if any are showing signs of abnormal condition or behavior. Individuals may be isolated for a physical examination based on abnormalities identified from the visual examination.
- (37)The term **“water resistant”** means a surface that does not permit the absorption of fluids. Such surfaces are those that can be thoroughly and repeatedly cleaned and disinfected, will not retain odors, and from which fluids bead up and run off or can be removed without their being absorbed into the surface material.
- (38) The term **“distributor”** means persons who acquire reptiles and amphibians for resale, barter, trade, or otherwise transfers such animals to other persons for sale, barter or transfer to the public. Distributors include but are not limited to persons who keep reptiles and amphibians in permanent or temporary facilities until the animals are transferred to another party.

The term **“retailer”** means persons who operate a facility regularly open to the general public for the sale of reptiles and amphibians.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

General Participation Requirements

1 Plan Implementation

1.1 Registration with the NRIP – Agreement to follow the Code of Conduct

1.1.1 Persons electing to participate and be registered in the NRIP must submit in writing an application containing the following:

- a) Applicant's name/title
- b) Name of business or facility (if applicable)
- c) Complete mailing address
- d) Actual physical street address for each facility.
- e) Telephone, fax number and email (as applicable)
- f) Description of activities and facility
- g) A statement certifying that the facility, so long as it is registered as such, will be operated consistent with the Code of Conduct appended hereto as Schedule 3.
- h) Registration fee: \$10. If the registrant subsequently seeks accreditation, said fee shall be applied to reduce the amount of the Accreditation Application Fee.

1.1.2 Any person operating and maintaining a facility for importing, receiving, breeding, selling, exporting reptiles or amphibians, or who otherwise transfers them from its facility, is eligible to become a registered facility.

1.1.3 Registration of a facility does not imply certification or accreditation, but means only that the registered facility has certified its adherence to the NRIP Code of Conduct.

1.2 Accreditation by the NRIP

1.2.1 Upon implementation of the Best Management Practices Accreditation Program under NRIP, registration pursuant to the Code of Conduct will cease for importers, exporters, distributors, and commercial breeders. Such entities may become accredited under NRIP pursuant to Section 3 of the NRIP.

1.2.2 Any person registered pursuant to the Code of Conduct may initiate the application process for NRIP accreditation at any time prior to December 31, 2004. Actual accreditation will be issued for qualified applicants upon implementation of the accreditation program.

1.2.3 Any pet retailer may apply for registration and/or accreditation subsequent to January 1, 2005.

2 Plan Participants

2.1 Voluntary Participation

2.1.1 Any person that operates and maintains a facility for importing, receiving, breeding, selling, exporting or otherwise transfers reptiles from its facility may apply to participate in the NRIP

- 2.1.2 Participation in the Plan is voluntary and a Participant may withdraw from the Plan by submission of notice in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of withdrawal.
- 2.1.3 NRIP accreditation shall be available only for persons who comply with the appropriate BMPs, apply for and obtain accreditation upon completion of the application process set forth in Section 3.
- 2.1.4 Compliance with the BMPs and Registration under the NRIP does not supercede other applicable Federal or state law or regulation.

3 Application, Registration, Suspension, Revocation, Reinstatement, Fees

3.1 Application

- 3.1.1 Persons desiring to participate in NRIP accreditation shall complete and submit an application.

Each Application shall contain the following information:

- a) Name of the person responsible for the facility. If not the owner, a description of the person's area of responsibility and verification that the individual may commit the facility.
 - b) Address.
 - c) Telephone, FAX numbers and E-mail.
 - d) Description of facility activities.
 - e) Draft set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
 - f) Statement that facility or owner possess the requisite federal and state permits, licenses, or other authorizations applicable to operations conducted at the facility, such as import, export, captive breeding, possession, acquisition, sale, transfer or otherwise dealing in reptilian/amphibian species.
 - g) Verified statement that applicant agrees to comply with the NRIP Code of Conduct and the Best Management Practices, including utilization of and compliance with its Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).
 - h) Name, address and telephone number of veterinarian or other person designated to conduct the facility inspection for the purpose of certifying that the Applicant has taken the necessary steps to qualify for accreditation.
 - i) A written statement by the consulting veterinarian that the facility has been inspected and is in compliance with the BMPs.
 - j) Such other information as requested with the Application or subsequent written request of the Plan Administrator.
 - k) The Accreditation Application Fee set forth in Section 3.2.1 for processing the application and supporting documents, and any applicable Annual Fee as set forth in Section 3.2.2.
- 3.1.2 Upon submission of a complete application for registration, the Applicant has filed Notice of Intent to comply with applicable BMPs described in the NRIP Manual.

3.2 Fees

3.2.1 Accreditation Application Fee shall be paid at the time the application is submitted. The Accreditation Application Fee is applicable to the entity seeking accreditation and is not assessed on a per unit basis if the applicant has multiple locations. The fee schedule is:

- a) For PIJAC members, \$100
- b) For non-PIJAC members, \$175

3.2.2 Annual Fees:

In addition to the payment of the initial Application Fee, Participants shall pay an Annual Fee based upon the type of facility as follows:

3.2.2.1 Breeders

- a) PIJAC member: \$100
- b) Non-PIJAC members: \$200

3.2.2.2 Importers, Wholesalers and Distributors

- a) PIJAC Members: \$200
- b) Non-PIJAC members: \$350

3.2.2.3 Pet Retailer

- a) PIJAC member Single store: \$50
- b) PIJAC Member Multiple stores: \$50 for each store for the first 6 units and \$10 per unit for each additional unit.
- c) Non-PIJAC members single store: \$100
- d) Non-PIJAC Member Multiple stores: \$20

3.2.2.4 Event Sponsors:

- a) PIJAC member \$100
- b) PIJAC member \$200

3.3 Notification of change of operation, name, or address of business

3.3.1 The Plan Participant shall promptly notify the Plan Administrator by certified mail of any change in the name, or address of his business or operation, or of any additional sites, within 10 days of any change.

3.3.2 The Plan Participant shall notify the Plan Administrator by certified mail of any change in the ownership, the types of animals handled or the operations of the Accredited facility within 30 days after making such change(s).

3.3.3 The Plan Participant which goes out of business or which ceases to function as described in its Application, or which changes its method of operation so that it no longer operates in conformance with the information submitted with its initial Application, may have its Accreditation or Registration canceled by making a written request to the Plan Administrator. The former Plan Participant is responsible for reregistering and demonstrating its compliance with the NRIP Plan and requirements should it desire to participate in the Plan.

- 3.4** Access and inspection of records and property.
- 3.4.1** Each Plan Participant shall, during normal business hours, allow officials of the United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Health Plant Inspection Service (APHIS) and the department of agriculture in the state where the Accredited facility is located:
- (1) To examine records required to be kept by the Plan;
 - (3) To inspect the facilities, property and animals;
 - (4) To document, by the taking of photographs and other means, conditions and areas of noncompliance.
 - (5) To use a room, table, or other facilities necessary for the proper examination of the records and inspection of animals.
- 3.5** Term of Participation
- 3.5.1** Accreditation shall be for the period of one year.
- 3.6** Denial of Initial Registration or Renewal Application
- 3.6.1** a) An Accreditation will not be issued to any applicant who:
- (1) Has not complied with the requirements of the Plan and has not paid the appropriate registration fee;
 - (2) Is not in compliance with all of the applicable standards set forth in this document;
 - (3) Has had their Accreditation revoked or whose Accreditation is suspended unless documented that previously identified defaults had been cured;
 - (4) Makes any false or fraudulent statements in or pursuant to their Application for Accreditation;
 - (5) Refuses to allow the inspector authorized pursuant to the provisions of the Plan free and unimpeded access to inspect the facility and records for purpose of verifying compliance with the provisions of the Plan; or
 - (6) Fails on three (3) consecutive re-inspections to correct any failure to comply with the provisions of the Plan.
- b) An applicant whose Application has been denied may request in writing a hearing for the purpose of showing why the Application for Accreditation should not be denied. The denial shall remain in effect until the final decision has been rendered. Should the denial be upheld, the applicant may again apply for Accreditation upon correcting identified failures to comply and submission of a new Application, the registration fee and a full and complete explanation of steps taken to cure such non-compliance.

3.7 Suspension or Revocation of Participation

3.7.1 An Accreditation may be suspended or revoked if a Registrant:

- a)
- (1) Has not complied with the requirements of the Plan and is not in compliance with all of applicable standards required by the Plan;
 - (2) Has made any false or fraudulent statements in or pursuant to their Application for Accreditation;
 - (3) Refuses to allow the inspector authorized pursuant to the provisions of Plan free and unimpeded access to inspect the facility and records for purpose of verifying compliance with the provisions of the Plan; or
 - (4) Fails on three (3) consecutive re-inspections to correct any failure to comply with the provisions of the Plan.
 - (5) Continues in a failure to comply with or repeatedly violates the Plan.
- b). In the event that a Plan Participant fails to demonstrate compliance, the Plan Administrator may issue a Notice of Failure to Comply and Need to Remedy by a Certain Date or be subject to suspension or revocation of their certification/accreditation pending demonstration of compliance. The Notice shall provide the basis for a proposed suspension or revocation and the Plan Participant shall be provided 45 days to respond in writing.
- c) The Plan Administrator shall, within 30 days after receipt of the response, notify the Plan Participant whether the proposed suspension or revocation will be imposed, The notification shall advise the Plan Participant of the reasons for suspension or revocation.
- d) The Plan Participant who is subject to suspension or revocation may request a hearing in writing within 30 days of receipt of the Plan Administrator's findings. The hearing shall be for the purpose of demonstrating why such action should not be imposed.
- e) The Plan Administrator shall convene a hearing within 30 days of receipt of the request for hearing.
- f) The suspension or revocation shall remain in effect until the final decision has been rendered.
- g) Should the suspension or revocation be upheld, the Plan Participant may, in no less than 6 months, reapply for Accreditation and upon correcting identified defaults and submission of a new Application, the registration fee, a full and complete explanation of steps taken to cure the defaults, and demonstration that the applicant is compliant.

3.8 Renewal Application

Each Registrant shall submit a completed Renewal Application and the applicable Renewal Fee at least 90 days prior to the expiration of the existing Accreditation on forms supplied by the Plan Administrator. An existing Accreditation shall remain in full force and effect pending the processing of a Renewal Application. In the event a Renewal Application is denied, an Applicant may appeal the decision in accordance with the provisions of Section 3.6.

4. General Facility Methods and Procedures

It is important that all Plan Participants demonstrate that they plan their activities so that they are performed in a manner consistent with the NRIP and its BMPs.

Evidence will therefore be sought demonstrating that the facility is managed in accordance with the NRIP requirements:

- ❖ Identify the appropriate handling and holding systems and equipment for handling species normally held at the facility.
- ❖ Determine regular checks that need to be performed to meet the goals and objectives of the NRIP.
- ❖ Ensure that logbooks, records or other mechanisms documenting compliance are maintained.
- ❖ Produce and make readily available documentation demonstrating compliance.
- ❖ Prepare and maintain written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) containing sufficient information and guidance for operating the facility in conformance with the Best Management Practices set forth in the NRIP and are applicable to the facility. The SOPs shall include BMPs applicable to the type of operation and the species commonly handled at the facility. The SOPs shall be readily available to all working at the facility and to authorized persons conducting inspections.

Best Management Practices:

- 4.1.1 As condition precedent to obtaining accreditation, all applicable BMPs must be implemented and followed for the full term of the accreditation.
- 4.1.2 Publish clearly understood SOPs incorporating applicable provisions of the BMPs and covering work standards and operating instructions appropriate for the facility. Each SOP shall be dated and reflect revisions by indicating revision number and the date of such revision. SOPs shall be posted or maintained in a notebook readily accessible to all employees. The SOPs shall be reviewed and modified as appropriate, but not less than once a year.
- 4.1.3 Compliance with the BMPs and Registration under the NRIP does not supercede other applicable Federal or state law or regulation.

- 4.1.4 Each facility shall develop written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which may include checklists, inspection forms and other instructional materials for operating the facility in conformance with the BMPs and generally accepted husbandry practices. The SOPs shall be by category of animal (e.g., snake, lizards, turtles, amphibians) or by species. SOPs should include information covering:
- Housing
 - Sanitation (animal and human)
 - Husbandry
 - Safety, including an emergency management plan
 - Intake Examination and Routine Inspections
 - Veterinary treatment
 - Inspections by veterinarian
- 4.1.5 Each facility shall have an isolation area or system where specimens may be held and maintained without exposing them to or letting them come into contact with other specimens that are not required to be isolated for inspection purposes.
- 4.1.6 Each facility shall provide suitable equipment, tools, devices, medications and acaricides for usage when animals are received, isolated and held until determined to be free of ticks.
- 4.1.7 Each facility shall provide equipment, resources and skills to ensure that each person responsible for handling the animals is trained or has the experience and necessary equipment to isolate and inspect reptiles for ticks.
- 4.1.8 Mechanisms and systems for isolating reptiles until they have been inspected/examined and cleared for introduction into the general animal facility or colony shall be established.
- 4.1.9 Suitable documentation methods shall be implemented to indicate when inspection has been completed and SOPs are in place (e.g., tick sheets to show when reptiles and amphibians have been examined [date, time, findings] and, if appropriate, treated and required processing completed);
- 4.1.10 Records of purchases and sales shall be maintained. Records will only be subject to review for tracking animal movement to facilitate disease control. Propriety information, such as acquisition costs or sales prices shall not be made available for such review.
- 4.1.11 Diagram of facility illustrating location of isolation area shall be maintained at the premises. A full description of isolation system shall be included.
- 4.1.12 Employee training shall cover fundamental procedures for handling and caring for the animals, inspecting and removal of ticks, applying prophylactic treatments, and other training needs to operate the facility in conformance with the BMPs. The SOPs shall provide adequate instructions and other information for operating the facility. Each employee shall acknowledge their understanding of the SOPs by signing a statement that they have read the applicable documents.
- 4.1.13 Employee educational materials shall address issues involving introduced species such as not deliberately releasing non-native or alien species into the environment.

- 4.1.14 All specimens offered for sale, barter, trade or transfer under the Plan shall be apparently free of ticks.
- 4.1.15 Advertising participation in the Plan must be in accordance with the Plan, applicable rules and regulations as set forth in the Plan.
- 4.1.16 Persons or business entities holding NRIP accreditation shall comply with the appropriate BMPs and adopt SOPs appropriate for the operation of their respective facilities.
- 4.1.17 Written records shall be maintained demonstrating compliance with the BMPs.
- 4.1.18 Vermin and pest control procedures shall be implemented.
- 4.1.19 Food, other than live food, shall be stored so as to prevent contamination by vermin.

- 4.1.20 Sick or injured reptiles and amphibians must be provided with timely veterinary care or be euthanized humanely.

5.0 **Consulting Veterinarian**

Participants applying for accreditation shall utilize the services of a consulting veterinarian to provide veterinary advice and to perform the periodic compliance inspections to verify that the Plan Participant has in place the policies and procedures, such as the SOPs, to be in compliance with the Plan.

Best Management Practices:

- 5.1.1 Plan Participants, upon consulting with its Consulting Veterinarian, will prepare written protocols covering intake and routine examinations, husbandry, veterinary care, ectoparasite monitoring and control. The protocols shall be maintained as a SOP.
- 5.1.2 The Consulting veterinarian shall conduct initial compliance inspection and advise the NRIP in writing that the Plan Participant has implemented the BMPs and SOPs required to manage the facility in conformance with the NRIP standards.
- 5.1.3 The Consulting veterinarian shall conduct periodic compliance inspections, to occur at least annually, as required to maintain accreditation or for processing renewal of the accreditation.

6.0 **General Facility Standards and Husbandry**

Receiving, intake inspection and examination, husbandry, handling, captive breeding, preparation for shipment, packaging, veterinary care and record keeping are an integral part of the NRIP system. Plan Participant's shall adopt procedures that address fundamental husbandry appropriate for reptiles and amphibians, and shall include but not be limited to the practices set forth in this section.

Best Management Practices:

- 6.1.1 Each participant shall ensure that these activities do not have unreasonable adverse effects on the welfare of the reptiles and amphibians. Each participant shall produce SOPs dealing with:
 - a) How stress is reduced to a minimum;

- b) How overcrowding of reptiles and amphibians is avoided;
 - c) How reptiles and amphibians are segregated;
 - d) How appropriate housing environments are maintained;
 - e) How to clean and disinfect the facility and containers housing the animals; and
 - f) How to monitor and document activities to demonstrate that the BMPs and SOPs are in effect and being followed.
- 6.1.2 Facilities shall be designed to provide protection from the elements and from extremes in temperature that are detrimental to the health and welfare of reptiles and amphibians.
- 6.1.3 Areas where reptiles and amphibians are housed, including walls, and floors shall be constructed so as to be capable of being water resistant and are readily cleaned and maintained.
- 6.1.4 Outdoor housing facilities shall be designed to prevent the escape of the reptiles and amphibians into a free-living state outside of the area designated for holding the species. If appropriate, barrier walls, fences or other perimeter devices shall be employed to keep the species contained in captivity.
- 6.1.5 Facilities shall be kept in a sanitary condition, shall have adequate barriers to prevent escape, and housing units for specimens shall be designed to prevent unintentional contact with other specimens.
- 6.1.6 Participants shall house all reptiles and amphibians in a safe and sanitary condition, and in a manner that does not result in threats to public health and safety, or the maltreatment or neglect of the animals. Participants shall follow the NRIP Code of Conduct and implement and maintain the BMPs including husbandry practices adequate to meet the needs of the species maintained, including nutrition, prophylactic treatments and caging and safety systems.
- 6.1.7 Primary enclosures shall allow for normal postural movements and social adjustments and shall be constructed so as to ensure the health and sanitary needs of the animals.
- 6.1.8 Primary enclosures shall be checked for the presence of ticks and to remove feces and soiled ground medium or substrate as appropriate. Clean and disinfect drinking water containers, food containers and bathing containers as needed. Care shall be taken to avoid unnecessary stress, particularly when animals are breeding, females are gravid, or in brumation.
- 6.1.9 Primary isolation enclosures shall be constructed in such a fashion and of such materials that minimize the risk of the entrance or exit of ticks.
- 6.1.10 Primary enclosures will be designed, operated and maintained to prevent the liberation of reptiles and amphibians into a free-living state. Any method of containment reasonably thought to prevent specimens from being released may be utilized.

- 6.1.11 Basking areas shall be provided, when appropriate, to the species affording both heat so that the animal can self-regulate its body temperature. Objective is to establish areas or sites within the primary enclosure where a temperature gradient is created where both air and surface temperature decrease as the distance from the heat source increases.
- 6.1.12 Animals shall be visually inspected routinely for signs of external parasites, illness, injury and stress.
- 6.1.13 Enclosures, water and food dishes, trays, and hide boxes shall be cleaned and disinfected as appropriate.
- 6.1.14 Food and water appropriate for the species shall be provided in accordance with husbandry practices adequate to meet the needs of the species maintained.
- 6.1.15 Pest control systems shall be implemented.

7.0 **Tick Control**

It is essential for each Plan Participant to ensure that steps are implemented and followed to minimize the risk of the introduction of ticks through the importation, interstate or intrastate movement of reptiles. While not all reptiles are vectors/hosts of ticks, precautionary steps must be implemented to inspect for ticks. If found, steps must be taken to remove the ticks and/or treat the host animal in such a manner as to eliminate the ticks. If specimens are being collected for federal or state research or verification programs, steps shall be taken to collect, secure and transfer such specimens to the appropriate research person.

Best Management Practices

- 7.1.1 Each facility shall have an isolation area where specimens may be held and maintained without exposing them to or letting them come into contact with other specimens that are not required to be isolated for inspection purposes.
- 7.1.2 Isolation enclosures shall be designed and constructed in such a fashion and of such materials to prevent the entrance or exit of ticks. Walls designed to prevent animals or ticks from climbing outside of container through use of barriers that prevent climbing or kill the parasites before they can escape from the primary enclosures.
- 7.1.3 New arrivals shall be placed in an isolation enclosure until such time as an intake examination and tick inspection have been completed and the animals are deemed tick free and cleared for release.
- 7.1.4 All animals shall be examined periodically for ticks and appropriate acaricides are applied as recommended by the consulting veterinarian and as needed to eliminate any parasites

- 7.1.5 Physical examinations are to be performed on new arrivals and periodically until the animals are declared tick free. If such an exam is not feasible, the animals should receive frequent visual examinations.
- 7.1.6 Substrate shall be inspected for signs of ticks and treated with acaricides when appropriate.
- 7.1.7 Isolation enclosures, holding areas and devices shall be disinfected between uses.
- 7.1.8 Waste materials shall be treated with an acaricide prior to be removal from the isolation area.
- 7.1.9 The shipping containers and isolation enclosures shall be cleaned and disinfected before new specimens are placed therein
- 7.1.10 The entire facility shall be visually inspected periodically for ticks.
- 7.1.11 Inspection and health records shall be maintained for each reptile (or lot of reptiles) until the reptile (or lot) is released from isolation indicating:
 - a) date and time of inspection
 - b) findings with respect to the presence of ticks
 - c) process followed to ascertain the presence of ticks
 - d) procedures utilized, if ticks found
 - e) prophylactic treatments, if any.
- 7.1.12 If ticks are found on specimens, the ticks shall be removed, stored or disposed of pursuant to procedures supplied by the United States Department of Agriculture or the Department of Agriculture of the state in which the facility is located.
- 7.1.13 Tick Report Form, Schedules 1 and 2, shall be completed and submitted to the appropriate authorities, as applicable.

8.0 Venomous Animals

- 8.1.1 Venomous animals are to be manipulated using hooks, tongs, tubes or other protective devices as appropriate for the species.
- 8.1.2 An accurate inventory of the animals, including scientific and common names and location of the animals on the premises shall be readily available. Identification shall indicate by enclosure the species within the enclosure.
- 8.1.4 Emergency numbers shall be posted next to telephones.
- 8.1.5 Primary enclosures shall be designed and constructed to prevent the escape of the animal(s). Locks or other locking devices must be used to avoid accidental opening.
- 8.1.6 Plan Participants shall maintain antivenins appropriate for the species handled on the premises, or be a member of an Antivenin Bank, or identify a medical facility within 60 minutes of the facility that has the necessary antivenin on the premises.

- 8.1.7 Written SOPs for administering first aid or other emergency procedures shall be provided to each person handling venomous reptiles and a copy shall be maintained in the area(s) where such animals are housed.

9.0 Display and Sale at Public Events

Event sponsors, to ensure human and animal health and safety, shall implement practices to minimize potential exposure, harm or injury. These practices should include staff and customer education information concerning health and safety. The best management contained herein should be referenced in the show rules.

- 9.1 Post information and health notices on the possibility of salmonella transmission.
- 9.2 Include in the show rules that vendors are required to visually inspect the animals being transported from an event to ensure that there is no presence of ticks and the animals are in safe transport containers.
- 9.3 Provide the name and address of at least one veterinarian in the proximity of the event who can inspect and issue any paperwork needed for animals being transported from the event across state lines or internationally.
- 9.4 For health and safety reasons, no live warm-blooded animals (i.e., mice, rats, other rodents, rabbits, birds, etc.) other than feeder animals should be allowed in the event except people and assist dogs.
- 9.5 Should attempt to separate exhibitors of warm-blooded prey animals from exhibitors of predator animals.
- 9.6 Include in the show rules that the health of the animal should be a consideration when choosing display containers. It should be clean, adequately ventilated and of suitable size. It should also reflect the animal's natural behavior (i.e., a tree dwelling snake should not be forced to lie on a flat bottom container without a suitable perch).
- 9.7 The temperature in the display rooms should be set for the reptiles, not the public.
- 9.8 Include in the Show Rules a reminder that exhibitors are required to comply with relevant local, state and federal regulations pertaining to interstate movement, possession and sale of animals in their possession.
- 9.9 Invite the appropriate government agencies to the event to help educate the industry and visitors.
- 9.10 All show promoters should carry sufficient liability insurance.
- 9.11 No venomous animals, including rear fanged animals, should be sold to anyone under 18 years of age.
- 9.12 Sales of venomous animals should be in a separate room or location within the event site.
- 9.13 Include in the show rules that venomous animals should be displayed and sold in a safe and secured container.
- 9.14 All reptiles and amphibians that can cause harm should be kept in a secure container at all times.

- 9.15** The promoter has the responsibility to enforce the best management practices at the event. The promoter also has the responsibility to expel any exhibitor from the event site that does not comply with these best management practices.

10.0 Reptile-associated Salmonella.

Plan participants must implement practices to minimize potential zoonotic transfer of Reptile-associated *Salmonella*. These practices should include staff and customer education, proper sanitation, and separation of human and animal food preparation areas.

- 10.1** Each facility must educate employees on how to prevent Reptile-associated *Salmonella* infection in humans. Education materials should be clearly posted and available for handing out to employees.
- 10.2** Records signed by employees indicating understanding of Reptile-associated *Salmonella* safety practices must be kept on file.
- 10.3** All hand-washing facilities must include soap or other appropriate disinfectants. All staff members must wash with soap or other appropriate disinfectant when finished working with any reptiles or reptile equipment.
- 10.4** Human dining (eating) and food preparation areas must not be used for animal food preparation, or any animal handling or housing.
- 10.5** Retail facilities must educate their employees and customers on how to minimize the risk of contracting Reptile-associated *Salmonella* infections in humans. Educational materials should be clearly posted and handed out to employees and customers.

11.0 Compliance Monitoring and Quality Assurance

The Best Management Practices (BMPs) are intended for implementation by all Plan Participants. In order to remain in good standing and retain accreditation as a Plan Participant, each participant agrees to follow the BMPs and compliance requirements that reflect minimum expectations to minimize the risk of introduction and spread of ticks foreign to the United States.

Best Management Practices:

- 11.1** Upon signature and submission of an application for NRIP certification, the applicant has filed a notice of intent that he or she will comply with the goals and objectives of the NRIP and with the applicable BMPs described in this document.
- 11.2** All BMPs and SOPs must be implemented prior to submission of an application for accreditation and remain in effect during a term of accreditation.

- 11.3 The Plan Participant or its designee shall periodically conduct a physical inspection of the premises and review not less than twice per year its policies and procedures to ascertain compliance with the BMPs and to ensure that the requirements of the NRIP, the BMPs and SOPs are current, being followed and applicable to the current operations. This review shall ensure that the requirements are clearly defined and unambiguous. This review shall also be undertaken when the SOPs or operating activities at the facility are amended or changed.
- 11.4 Facility inspections shall be conducted and documented according to the Plan.
- 11.5 Inspection protocols covering health and intake and periodic examinations for all incoming/outgoing shipments shall be conducted and documented.
- 11.6 Documentation of compliance with the BMPs and SOPs shall be maintained and amended as necessary when the operation of the facility is altered or amended. Documentation compliance shall be self-certified by the Plan Participant.
- 11.7 The Consulting Veterinarian or other authorized inspector shall conduct an annual review not more than 90 days nor less than 30 days prior to the expiration of each term of accreditation and submit a written report with respect to the facility's compliance with the BMPs. For facilities subject to a 3-year re-accreditation process, the inspection and review shall occur not more than 90 days nor less than 30 days prior to the expiration of each term of accreditation and the inspector shall submit a written report with respect to the facility's compliance with the BMPs
- 11.8 Records shall be maintained for a period of not less than three (3) years.

12 Trademarks and Logo

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13.0 Amendment of Plan

- 13.1** The Plan Administrator, or designee thereof, shall from time to time conduct a thorough review of all provisions of the Plan. Upon such review, any provision of this plan may be amended pursuant to provisions of this section.
- 13.2** A proposed amendment to the Plan, whether submitted by the Plan Administrator or otherwise initiated by petition, shall be presented to the PIJAC Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee, or any successor body, for its consideration and review. No later than 60 days following such presentation, such body shall conduct a vote on the proposal.
- 13.3** Any proposal receiving 2/3 affirmative vote of all members of the Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee, or successor, shall be deemed adopted. Such proposal shall become effective 60 days after adoption, unless an effective date is otherwise specified by the proposal.
- 13.4** Any NRIP Accredited Plan Participant in good standing may petition the Plan Administrator for amendment of a provision of the Plan. The Plan Administrator shall submit such petition to the Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee, with a recommendation for action, and the Subcommittee shall conduct a vote pursuant to the provisions of this section.
- 13.5** The Plan Administrator shall advise in writing the petitioning party of final action on the petition no later than 90 days following receipt of the petition.

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Adopted on June 16, 2003 by the Reptile and Amphibian Subcommittee, Governmental Affairs Committee of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC)

National Reptile Improvement Plan

TICK REPORT*

(One page per lot)

Page ____ of ____ pages

Tick report for RECEIVING REPORT DATED _____

Species of REPTILE/AMPHIBIAN with ticks visibly present

of host animals with ticks on them _____

Ticks treated with which acaricide? _____

Have procedures supplied by United States Department of Agriculture for tick removal, storage and disposal been followed? State what they are: _____

Have procedures supplied by _____ State Department of Agriculture for removal, storage and disposal been followed? State what they are: _____

*** Complete this form if any animals listed on Schedule 1 were found to have ticks.**

Reptiles/Amphibians were free of ticks on post-treatment exam on (date) _____

Inspected by _____
Signature

Isolation area/system decontaminated on (date) _____

Signature

National Reptile Improvement Plan CODE OF CONDUCT

NRIP Participants will

- 1. Implement protocols and procedures to inspect incoming shipments of reptiles and amphibians to minimize the risk of the introduction of ticks not native to the United States.**
- 2. Refrain from the release, transfer or sale of any reptiles or amphibians known to be harboring any ticks.**
- 3. Refrain from release, transfer or sale of any reptiles or amphibians known to be suffering from disease, illness or injury and will seek appropriate veterinary care for any animal in their custody when necessary.**
- 4. Maintain reptiles and amphibians in a suitable environment, providing proper housing, diet and care appropriate to the species.**
- 5. Conduct their activities and operations in accordance with applicable Federal, state and local regulations.**
- 6. Ensure that all people handling reptiles and amphibians receive appropriate training covering generally accepted husbandry standards, housing and sanitation, intake examinations and routine inspections, inspecting for and removal of ticks, and record-keeping.**
- 7. Work cooperatively with the United States Department of Agriculture and state departments of agriculture to ensure that the introduction of non-native ticks is prevented.**
- 8. Take the necessary steps to ensure that reptiles and amphibians are not released into the environment in a free-living state outside of the area designated for holding the species. If appropriate, barrier walls, fences or other perimeter devices shall be employed to keep the species contained in captivity.**
- 9. Maintain procedures, including public notices where appropriate, on how to reduce the chance of human infection of Reptile-associated Salmonella.**
- 10. Maintain records as prescribed by the NRIP.**