ASVCP Code of Conduct

Purpose
The American Society for Veterinary Clinical Pathology (ASVCP) is committed to providing a respectful, safe, and welcoming environment that is free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, as well as other intimidation and disruptive behavior for all participants (including but not limited to our members, staff, residents, students, speakers, exhibitors, guests, and volunteers), regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age or other protected characteristics under applicable law.

ASVCP members and those associated with the ASVCP by participation in ASVCP-affiliated activities or events are considered role models for personal and professional ethical standards as described below. Standards also are stated for the veterinary profession in the Veterinarian's Oath and the American Veterinary Medical Association's Principles of Veterinary Medical Ethics. All ASVCP members and other participants are expected to exercise consideration and respect in their speech and actions and to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner.

Applicable Settings
This policy extends to all ASVCP-related settings, including but not limited to:

• Annual Meeting, including scientific sessions, pre- and post-meeting workshops, exhibitions, and tours including ancillary events and all social gatherings within and outside the hotel(s) and conference meeting locations
• Executive Board teleconferences and meetings
• Committee and Task Force teleconferences and meetings
• Online Rounds, ASVCP supported social media platforms, ASVCP list-serv and other ASVCP-organized events or online forums

For situations in which an event is jointly coordinated between the ASVCP and another entity (e.g., joint ACVP/ASVCP annual meeting), participants are expected to follow all applicable conduct regulations. Should the conduct expectations conflict, regulations for the principal organizing agency will supersede but the ASVCP retains the right to investigate and/or apply consequences for unacceptable behavior under this policy.

Expected Behaviors
ASVCP members and other participants are expected to exercise consideration and respect in their speech and actions and conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner. As ambassadors for our profession, ASVCP members and other participants should, at all times, demonstrate high standards of personal conduct and aspire to elevate the profession by modeling integrity, competency, professionalism, truthfulness and collaboration. ASVCP members and other participants shall:

• Practice their profession with honesty, integrity and accountability, and abide by high professional and scientific standards.
• Truthfully and accurately represent one’s credentials, professional education and experience, as well as, where appropriate, potential conflicts of interest and/or funding sources.
• Demonstrate respect and consideration for all people, including respect for others’ research, teaching practice, service, and/or other experience.
• Refrain from destroying or vandalizing the property or materials of others.
• Refrain from any threatening conduct including threats to use a weapon to cause injury.
• Refrain from conduct that jeopardizes their own or others’ professional welfare including conduct that could create conflicts of interest.
• Refrain from inappropriate use of alcohol, smoking/vaping, or other legal substances, other than in designated areas and as guided by the law.
• Honor the intellectual property rights of the ASVCP and its participants.
• Refrain from harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, or other protected characteristics.
• Refrain from inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual language and images in public spaces (including presentation slides and speech).
• Refrain from conduct that is intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, disruptive, threatening, derogatory, unlawful or demeaning toward others. Harassment/Discrimination and Prohibited Behaviors are further defined below.
• Refrain from any other illegal activity not already covered above.

This list is not intended to be all-inclusive, but to demonstrate the type of conduct that ASVCP expects from its members and other participants.

Definition of Harassment/Discrimination and Prohibited Behaviors
Harassment/Discrimination includes, but is not limited to, verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of the individual’s age, race, creed, color, disability, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, religion, membership in the armed forces, or any other basis prohibited by applicable law.

Examples of prohibited behaviors include:

• Unwanted sexual advances; lewd propositions or innuendos; bragging about sexual prowess; leering; making sexual gestures; making sexually suggestive or graphic comments or engaging in inappropriate sexually oriented conversation; any implied or expressed threat of reprisal for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request
• Physical contact such as touching, patting, or pinching, or display of one’s own body with an underlying sexual connotation; unwanted physical touching or assault; impeding or blocking movements
• Unwelcome, insulting, suggestive, derogatory, or offensive gestures, remarks, jokes, innuendoes, propositions, comments, epithets, slurs, jokes or taunting about a person’s body, attire, gender or sexual orientation, religious affiliation, racial or ethnic origin, place of birth, citizenship or ancestry, age, disability, veteran status, or any other prohibited reason
• Displaying sexually suggestive, pornographic, sexist, racial, or derogatory objects, graphics, pictures, or other offensive material, whether physically or over the Internet
• Stalking, defined as follows: engaging in a course of conduct directed at a person that serves no legitimate purpose and demonstrates an intent to, or is reasonably likely to, cause alarm, fear, or intimidation to that person.
The above list of prohibited behaviors is not a complete rendering of what may be deemed harassment/discrimination by this policy but includes examples of possible actions that could be interpreted as harassment. The ASVCP has a “zero tolerance” policy toward discrimination/harassment and reserves the right to discipline members and participants in any ASVCP events/activities/media who engage in inappropriate conduct, even if it is not specifically referred to or defined in this Code.

**Notes on Sexual Harassment:**
Sexually harassing conduct can be by a person of any gender towards a person of any gender. Conduct that begins as consensual in nature may become harassment if one party withdraws their consent. Sexual or other harassment prohibited by this policy is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

**Note About Differences of Opinion and Offense:**
It is not a violation of this Code of Conduct Policy to express a professional opinion or to raise relevant research or an experience that may be at odds with the opinions or experience of others—if the comments are part of a serious discussion of the convening topic at hand and is offered in a manner that is both respectful and considerate. **However, making comments reasonably expected to cause offense gratuitously may be considered a violation.**

**Photography, Recording and Social Media**
ASVCP promotes the advancement and open sharing of scientific knowledge and recognizes a fundamental responsibility to prevent the unauthorized use of proprietary, preliminary, or unpublished information shared by speakers/presenters.

- **Photography:** Flash photography is prohibited. Non-flash photographs may be taken during oral, poster, or online presentations for non-commercial personal use only, unless prohibited by the speaker or meeting organizers, and may NOT be published or reproduced. Distraction to presenters and audience members must be minimized when capturing images.
- **Audio Visual Recording:** Audio or video recording of sessions by means of any device (e.g. cell phones/PDAs, laptops, cameras, etc.) is prohibited unless authorized by the speaker and the ASVCP. For joint events hosted between the ASVCP and another entity and in which the ASVCP is not the principal organizing entity (e.g., joint ACVP/ASVCP annual meeting), permission from the joint organizing entity may also be required.
- **Social Media:** Attendees may post information from sessions on social media in a professional manner but are expected to respect the wishes of presenters. Information or images from presentation slides marked “DO NOT POST” may NOT be shared on social media in any form. Information on posters may NOT be posted to social media unless permission is granted by the corresponding author/presenter. Participants are expected to respect the copyright and other intellectual property rights of presenters; provided, however, that this policy is not intended to, and shall not, limit the use of “fair use” or other applicable intellectual property doctrines.

**Reporting**
Reporting of conduct in violation of this policy, including discrimination or harassment, may be made to any ASVCP Executive Board member or to the ASVCP management company (The Rees Group or “TRG,” contact information provided at ASVCP.org). Anyone who feels unsafe at an in-person ASVCP event can also contact event security who should have contact information for TRG. Reporting may be in person, by telephone, by electronic communication...
(report@ASVCP.org) or in writing. Due to the difficulty of verifying anonymous complaints, such complaints in many cases may not be investigated, but ASVCP may, in its sole discretion, elect to investigate such reports. If a report is made by someone who is willing to be contacted, the **ASVCP Response Protocol for Conduct Violations at ASVCP Meetings** should, to the extent practicable, be followed at in-person events, and to the extent reasonable, a similar response will be followed for reports involving non-in-person activities. If a report is made by an individual who wishes to remain anonymous, reporting directly to TRG or via email at report@ASVCP.org is recommended and TRG will forward such reports to the Executive Board for review in an appropriate (e.g., anonymized) form as determined by TRG. The existence of this policy is not intended to, and does not, supersede any employer, educational institution, or other agency or entity's policies, standards of conduct, and related reporting requirements applicable to a particular individual. This policy may also be superseded by any legal reporting requirement based upon state or federal law.

ASCVP will endeavor to ensure that every report of behavior in violation of this policy is investigated promptly and impartially. The scope of an investigation will depend on the nature of the complaint and concurrent investigations of the same conduct by third parties, such as employers or educational institutions. The individual raising concerns may be asked to prepare a written statement; in most situations, a management group or Executive Board member or appointed representative will discuss the complaint details first with the individual filing the report (if not anonymous) and may also contact the alleged offender. The ASVCP may seek legal counsel and/or form a Hearing Panel to convene within 30 days of reporting of the event, with such panel to consist of at least five members selected by the Executive Board who are in good standing and are not acquainted with any of the persons or circumstances at issue to the extent possible. The purpose of such a Hearing Panel is to consider the allegations and supporting documentation and/or statements and to compile conclusions as to whether allegations are founded or unfounded, provide a recommendation for or against disciplinary action, and, as applicable, a recommended disciplinary action. The summary of evidence and outcomes from all sources for the investigation (i.e., as applicable, individuals, Hearing Panel, documents, etc.) will be reported to the ASVCP Executive Board at the conclusion of the investigation. The Executive Board will, in its sole discretion and in accordance with the voting procedure set forth below, determine appropriate action (if any) within 30 days of the conclusion of the investigation.

**Whistleblower Protections**

This ASVCP encourages reporting of illegal practices or violations of adopted policies of the Society, in accordance with the Society's then-current Whistleblower Policy (the “WP”; the current WP is in the Society's Policy Manual). Without limiting the WP, The ASVCP prohibits retaliation against any individual who in good faith reports discrimination, harassment or any other prohibited conduct. ASVCP further prohibits retaliation against any individual who in good faith participates in an ASVCP investigation into a report made under this policy or under the WP. Reporting in bad faith or the making of false reports is a violation of this policy and will be subject to appropriate actions, and may also result in civil and/or criminal liability.

**Consequences**

Unacceptable behavior including violations of this policy, by any participant, including attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, contractors, volunteer leaders, vendors, venue staff, and anyone with decision-making authority, will not be tolerated. Anyone asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately.
If a participant is actively engaging in unacceptable behavior at an ASVCP event/activity, the Society will use reasonable measures to follow the then-current **ASVCP Response Protocol for Conduct Violations at ASVCP Meetings**. The ASVCP management company staff, Executive Board, and/or meeting security may take immediate action to maintain the health and safety of its members and other participants, including but not limited to censure, removal from events/activities, or reporting to law enforcement. An incident report, investigation, and possible further disciplinary actions may follow.

The decision to pursue disciplinary actions requires a majority vote of voting Executive Board members, with recusal of any voting members that are deemed to be in conflict of interest. Disciplinary actions may include but are not limited to: censure; removal from events or forums (e.g., meeting, online rounds, list-serv) without monetary refund; prohibition from attending future ASVCP events or forums; and/or suspension or loss of ASVCP membership. Egregious violations will result in more severe sanctions, including the possibility of reporting to law enforcement. The decision as to type of disciplinary action requires a majority vote of voting Executive Board members, with recusal of any voting members that are deemed to be in conflict of interest. This requirement may be waived or suspended where there is a real and immediate possibility of harm or injury to a victim or other individuals. In this instance, immediate action (in the sole discretion of the actor) may be taken by any member of the Executive Board, their designees, ASVCP staff, or security personnel in an effort to attenuate the possibility of immediate harm to the victim, staff, or others. Once such action has been taken, the person taking such action must report to the Executive Board within a reasonable time to allow the Executive Board to make a final decision in the matter, or otherwise apply applicable policies of the Society.

The Executive Board may impose conditions or require corrective actions necessary to reinstate membership in good standing. Any member subject to disciplinary action may appeal the decision and initiate a second (final) investigation to include a Hearing Panel (whether or not one was convened previously) composed of new/different members than those of any previous panel. The other procedures set forth in this policy will apply as appropriate, and any decision upon a second review is final and not reviewable.

This policy is subject to revision at any time and may be updated as necessary.