

# **Society for Wildlife Forensic Science**

## **STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT AND CODE OF ETHICS**

Members of the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (SWFS) have an obligation to perform their duties in an ethical manner. First and foremost, in joining the SWFS, a member accepts the responsibility to promote the highest standards of professional and personal conduct among its members and affiliates. They act ethically in their relationships with the general public and with their employers, employees, peers, fellow SWFS members and associates. The following Standards of Professional Conduct and Code of Ethics is endorsed by all members and affiliates of the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science.

### **Professionalism**

Ethical and professionally responsible wildlife forensic scientists ...

1. Are independent, impartial, and objective, approaching all examinations with due diligence and an open mind.
2. Conduct complete and unbiased examinations. Conclusions are based on the evidence and reference material relevant to the evidence, not extraneous information, political pressure, or other outside influences.
3. Render conclusions only within their area of expertise, and about matters which they have given formal consideration.
4. Honestly communicate with all parties (the investigator, prosecutor, defense, and other expert witnesses) about all information relating to their analysis, when communications are permitted by law and agency practice.
5. Report to the appropriate legal or administrative authorities any unethical, illegal, or scientifically questionable conduct of other forensic scientists or laboratory employees.
6. Report conflicts between their ethical/professional responsibilities and applicable agency policy, law, regulation, or other legal authority, and attempt to resolve them.
7. Do not accept or participate in any case on a contingency fee basis or in which they have any other personal or financial conflict of interest or an appearance of such a conflict.
8. Do not engage in discrimination, harassment, or bullying in any form

### **Competency and Proficiency**

Ethical and professionally responsible wildlife forensic scientists...

9. Base their opinions and conclusions on scientifically validated and generally accepted

methods and tests.

10. Are committed to career-long learning in their forensic disciplines and stay abreast of new equipment and techniques while guarding against the misuse of methods that have not been validated.

11. Are properly trained and competent through testing prior to undertaking the examination of evidence.

12. If applicable, complete regularly scheduled:

- proficiency tests within their forensic discipline(s);
- comprehensive technical reviews of fellow examiners' work;
- verifications of conclusions.

13. Give utmost care to the treatment of all samples or items of potential evidentiary value to avoid tampering, adulteration, loss or unnecessary consumption.

14. Use appropriate controls and standards when conducting examinations and analyses.

Note: the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science has developed a Standards and Guidelines document to be used by practitioners in the various disciplines of wildlife forensic science to demonstrate appropriate controls and standards. This can be located on the Society website (<http://www.wildlifeformenscience.org/>).

Note: the Standards and Guidelines document will be reviewed and, if necessary, updated prior to each biennial meeting of the Society.

### **Clear Communications**

Ethical and professionally responsible wildlife forensic scientists...

15. Accurately represent their education, training, experience and area of expertise.

16. Present accurate data in reports, testimony, publications and oral presentations.

17. Make and retain full, contemporaneous, clear and accurate records of all examinations and tests conducted, and conclusions drawn, in sufficient detail to allow meaningful review and assessment of the conclusions by an independent person competent in the field.

18. Do not alter reports or other records, or withhold information from a report for strategic or tactical litigation advantage.

19. Support sound scientific techniques and practices, and never pressure another examiner or technician to arrive at conclusions or results that are not supported by data.

20. Accept their moral obligation to assure that the court understands the evidence as it exists, and to present that evidence in an impartial manner.

21. Provide complete and informative testimony, for example by qualifying their responses if needed when counsel attempts to elicit a simple yes or no answer.

**Obligations of Members to the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science**

- a. Every member and associate of the Society shall refrain from exercising professional conduct adverse to the best interests and objectives of the Society.
- b. No member or associate of the Society shall materially misrepresent his or her education, training, experience, area of expertise, or membership status within the Society.
- c. No member or affiliate of the Society shall issue public statements that appear to represent the position of the Society without specific authority first obtained from the Board of Directors.

**Provisions for Disciplinary Action**

Any member of the Society who has violated any of the above provisions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct may be subject to disciplinary measures by action of the Board of Directors. Such disciplinary action may include censure, suspension or expulsion from the Society, as detailed in the Policy Manual of the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science (<http://www.wildlifeforensicscience.org/>).

By accepting membership in the Society for Wildlife Forensic Science, I pledge to abide by the Society’s Code of Ethics and Conduct.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please sign and date, then send the original copy to:*

*SWFS Certification Body Record Keeping Committee  
c/o Wyoming Game & Fish Wildlife Forensics Laboratory  
1212 South Adams St  
Laramie, WY 82071*