



Membership Rules: Code of Professional Conduct, Engagement Expectations and Respectful Philosophical Discussion

The Ecology Detection Dog Working Group (EDDWG), hereafter referred to as the “Group”, has developed this Code of Conduct which is built on the recognition that everything in connection with our work will be, and should be, measured against the highest possible standards of animal welfare and ethical and professional conduct. It allows us to form a sense of community and identify as a specialist Group within a niche ecological industry which has seen recent growth and popularity.

Recognising the contributions that detection dogs can make to ecology and conservation is crucial. This Code of Conduct is designed to ensure all members act professionally, respectfully and appropriately, promoting best practices throughout the industry, safeguarding the health and welfare of working dogs, and fostering a commitment to ethical standards. All members must engage with a positive attitude and open mindset.

The operation of the Group is governed by the “Articles of Association” which can be found in the members area of the website.

Remit/Purpose

The Group membership is varied and includes detection dog trainers and handlers, ecologists, academics and representatives from statutory nature conservation organisations and non-governmental organisations. The Group aims to:

- Be open and collaborative promoting the development of evidence-based high standards
- Create a responsible culture concerning the use of conservation detection dogs during ecology and conservation surveys
- Encourage collaboration and involvement of key partners and organisations
- Support the lifelong learning process and resources for trainers, handlers and employers

Further details regarding the Group’s specific purposes are outlined within the “Articles of Association”.

The Group has an open and collaborative culture and encourages its members to be respectful, constructive and inclusive in all discussions, including at meetings, through the website forums, and at other events and activities.

The Group is dedicated to developing and promoting high standards of animal welfare for ecology and conservation detection dogs. By advancing training standards and accreditation protocols, we prioritise dog safety and welfare. Our goal is to foster a caring and compassionate community and share knowledge widely to promote responsible dog use.

Such welfare standards will also be applied to the protection of target and non-target wildlife encountered in the course of projects using dogs in the environment.

Who Must Follow Our Code?

We expect everyone operating as a member of the Group, including Board members to read, understand and follow this Code of Conduct. Failure to do so can result in termination of membership and removal from the Group. While the Code of Conduct is specifically written for members of the Group, we expect members operating in their extended workforces/places of employment and others who may be temporarily associated or collaborating with the Group to also follow the Code of Conduct. This may include:

- The general public – seeking more general information such as detection dog training methods and guidance, for media purposes, or browsing our website for details such as contact information or literature
- Interested parties – clients and ecologists with an interest in the field or who are seeking to commission a dog team for their project, explore new survey methods, or find guidance on how to incorporate an employed dog team into their business
- Full members – those already working in the field and undertaking research where they are making contributions to the Group and furthering the use of dog teams

Members have a right to a private life and the Code is not designed to interfere with the members' rights to this outside of the Group and their professional career. However, one of the underlying purposes of the Code of Conduct is to uphold the reputation of the profession and to protect the public interest. The Code of Conduct will therefore have an application into the private life of members, where they act in a personal capacity, if this impacts (or has the potential to impact) on the profession, the Group or is evidence of the member not acting with integrity.

This can include (but is not limited to):

- Their interactions with others (including members of the public and professionals), where the member engages on a public forum (to include social or other media, blogs, websites, etc.) and expresses views in a personal or professional capacity
- Where they are convicted of a criminal offence which is relevant to their professional work or brings (or could bring) the industry and/or Group into disrepute

Roles and Responsibilities

Membership to the Group is open to anyone who is interested in furthering its purposes, and who, by applying for membership, has indicated their acceptance of the duty of members and promises to follow the Code of Conduct. A member may be an individual, a corporate body, or an individual or corporate body representing an organisation which is not incorporated.

A member of the Group agrees to:

- Support the objectives of the Group
- Follow the guidelines for respectful discussion

- Promote the Group at appropriate opportunities in their day-to-day work and publicity
- Engage constructively with Group activities and discussions
- Keep the Group updated on relevant activities and actions which may contribute to the development and furtherment of the group, members and industry
- The Group encourages innovation and, in accordance with its objectives as well as the advancement of standards of practice. All members are encouraged to engage and stay up to date with changes and advancements in the industry to aid in the promotion of best practice methods for employing or running a dog team as well as canine husbandry, welfare and training
- Uphold the reputation of the Group and not bring it into disrepute and protect the Group's interest and public perception
- Promote and support fellow members and the Group as a whole. This is a popular and growing sector of the ecological community which is not only subject to ecological professional conduct and scrutiny but also that of animal behaviour, management, welfare and husbandry
- Ensure the Group and other members are upholding the Code of Conduct both within and outside of the Group's activities
- Professional judgement is an important skill of any professional person, but such judgement can be open to challenge; especially when the use of working animals is considered.
 - Members should seek advice/guidance on judgement application should they remain in doubt when faced with a decision outside of their skillset;
 - It is important to understand that non-adherence by a member to published technical guidance is not necessarily a breach of the Code of Conduct and may be an attempt to engage in furtherment of current practices; and
 - It is important to note that members are expected to demonstrate awareness of all relevant industry-accepted published technical guidance and be able to justify their decision making processes in light of this.
- Members are expected to comply fully with all laws in conducting their professional activities pertaining to:
 - Protection and management of the environment
 - Protection and management of protected species
 - Protection and management of their dogs, health, husbandry, welfare, safety and training
- Conduct themselves with professional integrity which includes acting honestly, objectively, with courtesy and in accordance with ethical principles such as fairness, impartiality, confidentiality, respecting others, and avoiding or managing conflicts of interest
- Members must not seek to dissuade or discourage a person from bringing any complaint or from pursuing any complaint that relates to the member's own, or any other member's or members', professional competence; and must not in any way penalise or threaten to penalise a person who has made such a complaint or who is pursuing such a complaint
- Members are expected to, at all times, demonstrate adherence to current relevant legislation in respect to avoiding discrimination

- Members are expected to take responsibility for their actions, omissions and all behaviour. Members can demonstrate doing so through the subsequent actions that they take to acknowledge any mistakes and/or to put things right

Complaints of alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct may be made by any member or non-member via the complaints submission document, whether an individual or an organisation, and may also, under certain conditions, be made by the Group's Board members. Potential complainants are strongly encouraged to first raise their concerns with the member to try and resolve the issue before making a formal complaint in order to avoid a lengthy inquiry.

Board members should be able to consider membership and membership renewal relating to complaints from other members about an individual member. Internal members and external complaints also.

Any member that does not meet these roles and responsibilities will have their membership reviewed by the board (see 'Ceasing to be a Member' section below)

Ceasing to be a Member:

Members may resign at any time in writing to the secretary.

Any offensive behaviour, including (but not limited to):

- racism
- sexism
- inflammatory remarks
- animal cruelty

will not be permitted or tolerated. Anyone behaving in an offensive way or breaking the Guidelines for Respectful Discussion (see Appendix 1) will be asked to resign from the Group if an apology is not given and/or the behaviour is repeated. The individual concerned shall have the right to be heard by a Committee appointed by the Board, accompanied by a representative/associate/friend, before a final decision is made.

Members must also not use the group for fraudulent gain, misrepresentation of the group and improper use of their membership of the working group for personal or professional gain will not be tolerated. The working group is to benefit all members of the community and provide a network for handlers and dog teams to promote and improve the use of conservation detection dogs in industry not for the furtherment of an individual where the group and its values and members may be put at risk.

Unapproved use and display of the working group logo is also not permitted and any use of the working groups logo requires explicit permission from the group and board members pending the reason and situation for use of the logo. This statement pertains only to the working groups main logo, there is a members specific logo available to show that members are involved with the working group.

The Board may delegate to a Committee to make that decision. Appropriate opportunities for representation by the Member will be included in the process.

Confidentiality of discussions and Commercial-in-Confidence

Discussions, ideas and documents circulated at Group meetings and shared and exchanged within the confines of the online forums should be considered Commercial-in-Confidence unless marked otherwise. This is to enable the free exchange of information and ideas on projects and initiatives in development, to facilitate collaborative working at an early stage. **Any working documents and results must not be shared outside of the Group unless with the written permission of the authors. Authors of documents maintain the ownership and copyright of all documents after circulation.** This will both protect potentially commercially valuable ideas and materials and ensure that project details and materials are not released prematurely.

Members agree to sharing their contact details within the Group, but these should not be shared outside of the Group without permission.

Amendment, Modification or Variation

This Code of Conduct may be amended, varied or modified in writing after consultation and agreement by quorum at any time.

Appendix 1

Guidelines for Respectful Discussion

The following guidelines for respectful discussion have been adapted from guidelines from the New York University Department of Philosophy:

Respect

- Any offensive behaviour, including racist, sexist or inflammatory remarks, harassment, bullying and/or prejudice will not be tolerated inside or outside of Group meetings/online forum discussions. Any incidents of this nature should be reported to the Secretary (see 'Ceasing to be a Member')
- Be kind
- Do not be incredulous, roll your eyes, make faces, laugh at a participant, or start side conversations
- Do not present objections as flat dismissals (leave open the possibility that there is a response)
- Do not speak over others, especially toward the beginning of an exchange (later in a long exchange or a long speech, there's more room for back and forth with interruption, but it is best to let people get their point out first)
- Please acknowledge your interlocutor's insights as well as those of all contributors

Constructiveness

- Objections are welcomed and encouraged, but should be cast in a constructive way that still enables collaboration and community, and supports the objectives of the Group

Inclusiveness

- If you haven't attended a meeting for a while, check previous minutes and forum notes so you are aware and up-to-date of Group activities, discussions and agreed actions
- Don't dominate discussions (meeting Chairs have a role in the management of this)
- It's OK to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed – there is no such thing as a stupid question. These questions often highlight key aspects that have not been properly aired/testes
- Do not use unnecessarily divisive examples to illustrate a point
- Chairs should attempt to balance discussion between participants, prioritising people who haven't spoken before, and keeping in mind the likelihood of various biases (e.g. implicit gender biases) when calling on questioners and applying these guidelines

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Draft for agreement by members