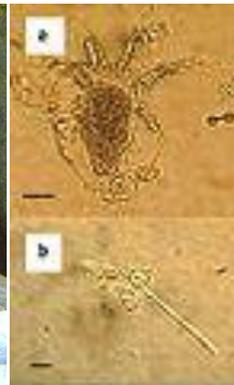


Voluntary Code of Conduct for Saint Lucia's Pet Sector (PS VCoC) with Species Reference to Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

An output produced by the public and private partners attending the workshop series
Pets and Invasive Alien Species (IAS)
held at conference room of the Veterinary Division of the
Ministry of Agriculture, Food Production, Fisheries and Rural Development (MAFF) in Balata
and organized by the Forestry Department of the
Ministry of Sustainable Development, Energy, Science and Technology (MSDEST)
31 July 2013, under the project
Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean
Project No. GFL / 2328 – 2713-4A86, GF-1030-09-03



Clockwise from top left:
Lionfish,
Red-eared slider,
African clawed frogs
vectored the
cytridiomycoses,
caused by
Batrachochytrium
dendrobatidis



Little Paws

Pet Shop & Veterinary Services

The Commercial Center, Beanfield . Vieux Fort . (758) 454 7087



Veterinary & Livestock Division

Voluntary Code of Conduct for the Pet Sector on Saint Lucia

(PS VCoC)

Current best practices on managing the pet trade as IAS pathway invariably involve collaboration between government, the private sector and experts who conduct science-based and transparent risk assessments. Such an approach works best when coupled with public awareness campaigns and involvement of local communities. VCoCs, such as this one, and certification schemes are instrumental in (self)regulating the industry and raising public awareness.

Voluntary Code of Conduct for Pet Stores, Breeders and Dealers

- Specialize on non-invasive species from reputed captive breeders only, when advertising, breeding, importing and retailing pets and accessory species, such as aquarium plants or live feed.
- Encourage customers to purchase non-invasive species from reliable sources only. In communication with Government, academia, conservation and animal welfare organizations, assist in awareness-raising activities.
- Ensure that the invasive potential of animals is assessed prior to introducing and marketing a species new to Saint Lucia. Invasive potential should be assessed by a qualified expert under the auspice of the relevant authorities. Internationally recognized risk assessment methods, such as IABIN I3N, should be employed.
- Ensure all imported species have correct and complete documentation, i.e. scientific species name. Import only a limited number each time.
- Phase out existing stocks of invasive species in a biosecure and humane manner. Do not (re-) stock, advertise or offer high risk species. Work with local experts and stakeholders to identify non-invasive species that are aesthetically and ecologically suitable alternatives to invasive species in Saint Lucia.
- Ensure that animals are kept in sufficiently large cages/tanks so that no overcrowding occurs. As far as possible, keep specimen housed by geographic origin.
- Ensure biosecure disposal of invasive alien species, where these are to be discarded.
- Encourage the formation of a formal group of responsible pet traders and/or owners. As a group you can whistleblow more easily.
- Assist pet owners in re-homing pets they no longer can or want to take care of.
- Accept those specimen that cannot be re-homed for biosecure and humane disposal
- Assist pet owners, local suppliers and breeders to dispose of existing invasive stock in a biosecure and humane manner. Advise them on suitable alternatives species.
- If there is a decision to stock species with some risk, participate in mitigating initiatives, such as triploids, same sex stores, or marketing of only neutered individuals.
- Sell exotic pets only to clients who adopt and sign the owners' part of this VCoC.
- Keep a record of pet owners with exotic species and stock sold to them.
- Follow all laws on importation and quarantine of pet and accessory species across political boundaries. Bear in mind that aggressive dog breeds are restricted in Saint Lucia and may neither be imported, bred, traded, given or sold. Existing stock must be neutered and registered to an adult owner, who is obliged to follow other provisions of the Animals Act.
- Get informed on international initiatives, such the Ornamental Fish International (OFI), the Ornamental Aquatic Trade Association (OATA) in the UK, the Pet Industry Advisory Council

(PIJAC) in the USA or the Marine Aquarium Council (MAC) in Australia. They offer a range of tools and out-reach materials that may be adaptable to Saint Lucia.

Voluntary Code of Conduct for Pet Owners

- Ask for non-invasive species from reputable sources (captive breeders only) when you purchase pets and live accessories. Request that pet stores and breeders promote, display and sell non-invasive species from reputable captive breeding facilities only.
- Seek information from the relevant authorities on which species are invasive in the Caribbean or may become invasive if introduced.
- Phase out invasive pet and accessory species that you may already own. Contact the retailer, veterinarian and/or the authorities to assist you in safe and humane disposal.
- If the decision is taken to maintain an existing invasive species, ensure that it is contained and controlled through secure and species-appropriate, i.e. humane and hygienic, confinement and reproductive control: spay or neuter your pets.
- Never release any pet or live accessory organism into the wild.
- Return pets to a responsible pet shop, veterinary clinic or Government agency if you no longer want or can take care of them for re-homing or euthanasia, as appropriate.
- Do not trade pets with other pet owners if you suspect they are species with invasive characteristics.
- Assist in the formation of formal groups of responsible pet owners and participate in their activities. Help educate other pet owners in your community and in pet-related gatherings, such as pet shows, training sessions, visits to the vet.
- Participate in early warning systems by reporting invasive species you observe in your area to the relevant authority.
- Seek the best information on control of invasive pet and accessory species, and work with other like-minded individuals to remove these species from your area in an ethical and humane manner under the guidance of knowledgeable professionals.

Voluntary Code of Conduct for Veterinarians

- Collaborate with other Government agencies, academia, conservation and animal welfare organizations in preventing the introductions of potentially invasive animals as well as their pathogens and parasites.
- Actively participate in awareness-raising. Veterinary clinics are a hub for pet owners and thus an ideal venue to display and disseminate educational materials
- Assist pet owners in re-homing pet they no longer can or want to take care of. Facilitate networking via pet-sitting services to help keepers through periods of sick leave or travel.
- Assist in neutering/spaying programmes and, where applicable, euthanasia of invasive species.
- Assist in identifying hubs of high risk behaviour: wildlife and pet smuggling, joint holding facilities for animals of different geographic origin, informal breeding and trading. Mediate between pet owner and invasive species experts to facilitate an informed transition to safer practices.
- Take advantage of continuing education opportunities to learn more about the invasive species issue, including wildlife diseases and zoonoses.
- Encourage breeders and pet stores to provide clients with non-invasive animals.

Support from Government Agencies Required by the Pet Sector to Effectively Adopt the Pet Sector (PS VCoC) with Species Reference to Invasive Alien Species (IAS)

Capacity-building

- Training of veterinarians in wildlife diseases
- Training of customs inspectors so they recognize most commonly imported species
- Training of pet breeders, vendors, owners and general public; provision of educational material for different audiences
- Educational materials to hand out

Regulatory framework and enforcement

- All imports of live organisms must have correct scientific names
- Introduce compulsory licensing system and registry for exotic species
- Customer record keeping by pet stores and breeders should be compulsory
- Introduce micro-chipping for animal imports
- Improve surveillance at ports of entry
- Include VCoC provisions, including incentives and polluter-pays principle, in laws & regulations and enact

Sector incentives

- Import permit permits should have differentiated prices, giving discounts for species on a “white list” of acceptable and assessed species

Relevant Authorities:

- Forestry Department for plants and animals in their own right
- Veterinary Division for animal health and veterinary certification
- Quarantine Unit of Agriculture for plant health and import/export certification
- Ministry of Health for zoonoses. Several units may be applicable: pathology, epidemiology and/or environmental health)
- Ministry of Local Government for abandoned and trespassing animals, as well as dangerous dogs.