



DAPTF Fieldwork Code of Practice

A Code of Practice, prepared by the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (DAPTF) to provide guidelines for use by anyone conducting fieldwork at amphibian breeding sites or in other aquatic habitats.

Observations of diseased and parasite-infected amphibians are now being frequently reported from sites all over the world.

This has given rise to concerns that releasing amphibians following a period of captivity, during which time they can pick up inapparent infections of novel disease agents, may cause an increased risk of mortality in wild populations.

Amphibian pathogens and parasites can also be carried in a variety of ways between habitats on the hands, footwear, or equipment of fieldworkers, which can spread them to novel localities containing species which have had little or no prior contact with such pathogens or parasites. Such occurrences may be implicated in some instances where amphibian populations have declined.

Therefore, it is vitally important for those involved in amphibian research (and other types of wetland/pond studies including those on fish, invertebrates, and plants) to take steps to minimise the spread of disease agents and parasites between study sites.

The DAPTF Fieldwork Code of Practice

1. Remove mud, snails, algae, and other debris from nets, traps, boots, vehicle tyres, and all other surfaces. Rinse cleaned items with sterilized (eg. boiled or treated) water before leaving each study site.
2. Boots, nets, traps etc. should then be scrubbed with 70% ethanol solution and rinsed clean with sterilized water between study sites. Avoid cleaning equipment in the immediate vicinity of a pond or wetland.

3. In remote locations, clean all equipment as described above (or with a bleach solution) upon return to the lab or "base camp". Elsewhere, when washing-machine facilities are available, remove nets from poles and wash with bleach on a "delicates" cycle, contained in a protective mesh laundry bag.
4. When working at sites with known or suspected disease problems, or when sampling populations of rare or isolated species, wear disposable gloves and change them between handling each animal. Dedicate sets of nets, boots, traps and other equipment to each site being visited. Clean and store them separately at the end of each field day.
5. When amphibians are collected, ensure the separation of animals from different sites and take great care to avoid indirect contact between them (e.g. via handling, reuse of containers) or with other captive animals. Isolation from unsterilized plants or soils which have been taken from other sites is also essential. Always use disinfected/disposable husbandry equipment.
6. Examine collected amphibians for the presence of diseases and parasites soon after capture. Prior to their release or the release of any progeny, amphibians should be quarantined for a period and thoroughly- screened for the presence of any potential disease agents.
7. Used cleaning materials (liquids etc.) should be disposed of safely and if necessary taken back to the lab for proper disposal. Used disposable gloves should be retained for safe disposal in sealed bags.

The DAPTF Fieldwork Code of Practice has been produced by the DAPTF with valuable assistance from Begofia Arano, Andrew Cunningham, Tom Langton, Jarnie Reaser and Stan Sessions.

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