



## Liselo Labs (Pty) Ltd (Lesotho) Animal Research Ethics Policy

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## 1. Preamble

The Liselo Lesotho Animal Research Ethics Committee (LLAREC) was established by Liselo Labs (Pty) Ltd. to oversee and ensure the ethical use of animals in research conducted by Liselo Labs and select third parties in Lesotho. This policy is based on the 2021 Animal Ethics Policy of the National Research Foundation - South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (NRF-SAIAB) and the 2023 Rhodes University Policy on Research Ethics - Animal Subjects. This policy shall be made available to all Liselo Labs stakeholders and interested parties.

### 1.1. Ethical Values

- 1.1.1. Liselo Labs recognises that humans have an obligation to respect the sentient nature of animals by being considerate of the fact that they respond to stress, feel pain, and may remember such experiences.
- 1.1.2. Liselo Labs has adopted the principle of instilling a culture of care in our people and those we collaborate with. This is proactive and we encourage everyone to actively think about, contemplate and accept responsibility for the care and well-being of humans, animals and the environment.
- 1.1.3. The care and use of animals for scientific purposes must be justified in accordance with the core ethical Principles of the four Rs:
  - 1.1.3.1. Replacement of animal experiments with alternative models where feasible.
  - 1.1.3.2. Reduction of the number of individual animals used to achieve the level of scientific rigour required to achieve the research goal.
  - 1.1.3.3. Refinement of experimental design, procedures, care, and husbandry, to enhance the quality of life and minimise or eliminate the impact on individual animals in terms of actual or potential pain, suffering, stress, distress, and lasting harm.
  - 1.1.3.4. Responsibility to obtain animals and tissues ethically and provide animals with dignity, enrichment, and opportunity to engage in natural behaviours to the greatest extent possible; and to design, conduct, monitor, and report findings ethically and responsibly.

This means that animals may only be used when there is convincing scientific justification; when the scientific objectives cannot reasonably be achieved using alternative non-animal methods; when the number of animals used is minimised to the lowest number that will achieve the scientific objectives; when the expected benefits (to humans, animals, and/or the environment) outweigh the potential harms in terms of animal suffering; and when every effort has been made to

reduce animal suffering (including discomfort, pain, fear, distress, or lasting harm).

- 1.1.4. Prospective ethical review and approval of animal care is a fundamental requirement when dealing with the collection, care, or use of animals for any scientific purposes.

## **1.2. Ethical Standards**

- 1.2.1. Liselo Labs is committed to high ethical standards with regards to the care and use of animals and complies with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE)'s Terrestrial Animal Health Code of 2023 and relevant legislation in Lesotho. This policy has been based on the principles outlined in the South African National Standard for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes (SANS 10386:2021) produced by the South African Bureau of Standards, as well as the South African Department of Health's Guidelines for Ethics in Health Research (2015) as minimum standards that must be adhered to in all aspects of animal care.
- 1.2.2. Liselo Labs is committed to high ethical standards with regards to the care and use of the environment, habitat conservation, and the conservation of populations and species.
- 1.2.3. In striving for high ethical standards, Liselo Labs may elect, at its discretion, to adopt any additional standards, where relevant and feasible, in part or in whole, including but not limited to stakeholder norms, international publishing guidelines, recommendations of relevant national ethics councils, etc.
- 1.2.4. The care and use of animals for scientific purposes must comply with relevant national legislation and regulations, as well as relevant international laws and treaties.

## **1.3. Scientific Uses of Animals**

The various uses of animals for scientific purposes (including the care of such animals) undertaken by Liselo Labs personnel and other relevant persons, as defined in this policy, are complex and may include research on invertebrates (eg. insects) and vertebrates (eg. birds, fishes, and mammals).

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the care and use of animals for scientific purposes aligns with Liselo Labs' high ethical values and standards, as outlined above; and to distinguish Liselo Labs as a leader in the field of the ethical care and use of animals for scientific purposes.

### **3. Definition of Terms**

#### **3.1. Animal**

Any live non-human vertebrate or invertebrate, including their fertilised eggs, embryos, and fetuses.

#### **3.2. Scientific Purposes**

The care and use of animals for research, teaching, training, testing, validation, field trials, production of biological substances, environmental or observational studies; to advance knowledge, test a hypothesis, supply or test a product, provide organs / tissues / cells / gametes, act as a host, or teach procedures or techniques.

#### **3.3. Principal Investigator (PI)**

The individual who heads the research project and takes the responsibility for conducting the research and/or teaching activities involving animals.

### **4. Scope**

This policy applies to the following animals and people:

#### **4.1. Animals**

All non-human animals to be used for any scientific purposes, in particular:

- 4.1.1. Live animals that will be cared for or used for scientific purposes.
- 4.1.2. Live animals that will be killed specifically to be used for scientific purposes, including collection of samples.
- 4.1.3. Fertilised eggs, embryos, and fetuses.
- 4.1.4. At Liselo Labs' discretion, this policy's scope may be extended to include the use of collections, specimens, samples, tissues, cells, DNA, or other materials from dead animals.

#### **4.2. People**

Liselo Labs shall define Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to ensure appropriate ethical standards and levels of ethical oversight for the projects and activities of all the below-mentioned categories of people, including the methodology to be used for the review, approval, and monitoring processes of these studies and activities. These SOPs will include appropriate oversight ranging from direct review, approval, and monitoring through LLAREC to acceptance of approvals from other animal ethics committees. All members of a research team have shared responsibility for

the ethical and humane use of animals, and must be aware of and satisfied with the degree to which the conduct of the activity meets legislative requirements and Liselo Labs policy.

- 4.2.1. Persons who are salaried and directly managed by Liselo Labs.
- 4.2.2. Students from educational institutions who are involved in collaborative projects with Liselo Labs.
- 4.2.3. Research associates of Liselo Labs.
- 4.2.4. Persons who make use of the laboratories, equipment, infrastructure, or any other property or resources of Liselo Labs.
- 4.2.5. Any other person who uses animals for scientific purposes at Liselo Labs.

## **5. Policy Principles and Implementation**

### **5.1. The Liselo Labs Institutional Officer**

- 5.1.1. In compliance with the WOAHA's Terrestrial Animal Health Code of 2023 and the SANS 10386:2021 guidelines, Liselo Labs has appointed an institutional official (ie. the person who, as a representative of senior administration, bears ultimate responsibility for the animal care and use programme, and is responsible for resource planning and ensuring alignment of programme goals with the mission of the institution). The IO may not serve on the AREC.
- 5.1.2. The Liselo Labs institutional officer is the Liselo Labs' Research Director.

### **5.2. The Liselo Lesotho Animal Ethics Committee (LLAREC)**

- 5.2.1. In compliance with the WOAHA's Terrestrial Animal Health Code of 2023 and the SANS 10386:2021 guidelines, Liselo Labs has appointed an institutional animal research ethics committee (AREC) for Lesotho, the Liselo Lesotho Animal Research Ethics Committee (LLAREC).
- 5.2.2. The LLAREC reports directly to the Liselo Labs institutional official.
- 5.2.3. The composition, responsibilities, and functioning of the LLAREC are described in the committee's Terms of Reference (ToR).

### **5.3. Ethical Review, Approval, and Monitoring**

- 5.3.1. The LLAREC is responsible for the oversight of the entire institutional animal care and use programme in Lesotho, including review, approval, and monitoring of all projects and activities that involve the care or use of animals for scientific purposes, as defined in this policy.

- 5.3.2. Liselo Labs requires prior written ethical approval from the LLAREC before any projects or activities that relate to the care or use of animals for scientific purposes in Lesotho, as defined in this policy, may be initiated.
- 5.3.3. Retrospective ethical review and approval or clearance is not permitted.
- 5.3.4. Ethical approval is linked to a specific Principal Investigator (PI) and falls away if the PI leaves the project before it is completed. It must be ensured that an application for an amendment to the approved protocol is made when a new PI is appointed.
- 5.3.5. Researchers should keep in mind the requirement of prior ethics review and clearance when planning the timeframes for their research.

#### **5.4. Permits**

- 5.4.1. All necessary permits must be obtained from the relevant authority or authorities prior to the initiation of any relevant project or activity.
- 5.4.2. The details of all relevant permits shall be provided in the LLAREC application.
- 5.4.3. If projects or activities are performed in partnership with external (ie. non-Liselo Labs) persons on their permit, the details of that permit must be provided in the LLAREC application.
- 5.4.4. No living organism may be collected without permits issued by the relevant authority.
- 5.4.5. Permits must be carried by relevant persons for the duration of the project or activity.
- 5.4.6. In all cases, permit requirements and stipulations must be adhered to.

#### **5.5. Reporting**

- 5.5.1. Any adverse effects, changes, discontinuation, and unforeseen events that occur in the approved work involving animals must be immediately reported to the LLAREC.
- 5.5.2. The LLAREC will investigate and attempt to satisfy objections or concerns that were raised with respect to ethical standards in any ongoing or completed project. The respective SOP of LLAREC must be adhered to for the particulars.
- 5.5.3. The LLAREC may withdraw approval. In this case it has to inform the Principal Investigator and the hosting institution about the decision made and the reasons. The project must then be discontinued immediately.

- 5.5.4. A brief report must be submitted to the relevant committee on the completion of every research programme that has been granted ethical approval. The report should include a very brief summary of results and conclusions obtained; importantly, whether there were any unforeseen and undesirable consequences and if so, the steps that were taken to rectify them.

## **5.6. Breaches and Violations**

Breaches or violations of Liselo Labs policies (including this policy), codes, conditions for ethical approval of projects or activities by LLAREC:

- 5.6.1. Persons who are salaried by Liselo Labs will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant Liselo Labs disciplinary procedures.
- 5.6.2. Students and research associates based at universities or other institutions will be referred to their respective university or institution for disciplinary action.
- 5.6.3. Research associates will have their research agreements with Liselo Labs reviewed.
- 5.6.4. Other persons will be dealt with as defined by the Liselo Labs institutional official.

## **6. Accountability**

### **6.1. The Liselo Labs Institutional Official (IO)**

- 6.1.1. The Liselo Labs IO, in consultation with the governance structures of Liselo Labs, is responsible for the implementation of this Animal Ethics Policy and for ensuring compliance with relevant standards.
- 6.1.2. The Liselo Labs IO bears ultimate responsibility for the animal care and use programme and is responsible for resource planning and ensuring alignment of programme goals with the institutional mission.
- 6.1.3. The Liselo Labs IO is authorised to, and shall duly appoint an Animal Research Ethics Committee, as per this policy.

### **6.2. The Liselo Lesotho Animal Research Ethics Committee (LLAREC)**

- 6.2.1. The LLAREC is responsible for the implementation of the Animal Ethics Policy, as per the stipulations in the committee's Terms of Reference.

### **6.3. Declaring Conflicts of Interest**

- 6.3.1. Conflicts of interests and the declarations thereof are of utmost importance, and these are to be handled strictly according to the guidelines and rules in the Terms of Reference and relevant SOPs.



#### **6.4. Other persons to whom this Policy Applies**

- 6.4.1. All persons included in the scope of this policy are responsible for its implementation within their respective areas of activity.
- 6.4.2. All persons who care for and/or use animals for scientific purposes for LLAREC-approved projects have direct ethical and legal responsibility for all matters relating to the welfare of the animals used. The ultimate responsibility for any LLAREC-approved project or activity lies with the Principal Investigator of that project or activity.
- 6.4.3. Researchers must recognise and meet their responsibility for:
  - 6.4.3.1. Adherence to the applicable Liselo Labs policy, ToR, and SOPs.
  - 6.4.3.2. Ongoing compliance with requirements of the LLAREC.
  - 6.4.3.3. The appropriate design, methodology, and execution of their research.
  - 6.4.3.4. Planning so that research findings have a high degree of validity.
  - 6.4.3.5. Appropriate management of potential conflicts of interest.
  - 6.4.3.6. In reporting findings, adhering to the Principles of honesty, clarity, comprehensiveness, accountability, and openness to public scrutiny.
- 6.4.4. The governing professional codes should be acknowledged and honoured when conducting research.

#### **7. Monitoring and Evaluation of this Policy**

The Liselo Labs board is responsible for conducting a comprehensive review of this policy at a minimum of every year, or more frequently as required, in order to stay current with applicable legislation, ethical standards, and Liselo Labs strategic objectives.