

MHS Hands-On Policy

MHS provides a public service by exposing the public to various reptiles and amphibians for the purpose of educating them about the natural history, the characteristics, and the biological value of reptiles and amphibians. This should be an enjoyable experience for the animal handler as well as the public. The following policy will ensure safety for the public, the handler and the animal(s). For purposes of definition, a Hands-On Event is any event in which MHS members participate in the public eye with live animals that is sanctioned by the MHS Education Chair (otherwise known as follows as Public Education Coordinator).

1.0 General

- 1.1 The Public Education Coordinator will oversee Hands-On Events. The Public Education Coordinator reports to the MHS Board of Directors.
- 1.2 A copy of the current MHS insurance policy shall be at all Hands-On Events.
- 1.3 All events shall be supervised by the Public Education Coordinator or an experienced MHS member approved by the Public Education Coordinator and/or the MHS President.
- 1.4 A copy of this policy will be signed and dated by every participating MHS member no less than one time per year. Participants under 18 years of age will also have this policy signed by their parent or legal guardian.

2.0 Participant of MHS Hands-On Events

- 2.1 All participants must be current members of MHS in good standing.
- 2.2 All participants will be in compliance with 1.4
- 2.3 Participants 14 years of age and under will be under direct supervision of a parent or guardian.
- 2.4 Participants 15 to 18 years of age may participate as individuals only when adult MHS members are present and must have a written permission slip on file signed by a parent or guardian.

3.0 Animal Handling and Personal contact at MHS Hands-On Events

- 3.1 No venomous animal will be used at a Hands-On Event. These include venomoid and de-fanged animal(s). Special case exceptions to this only with approval of the Public Education Coordinator and the MHS President.
- 3.2 Animals known to secrete toxic skin substances must be displayed in an enclosed container.
- 3.3 Public safety is of utmost importance. Animals used at events where public contact is involved must be under full control at all times. Animals exhibiting aggressive behavior shall not come in contact with the public.
- 3.4 Participants will never allow the public to touch or come into contact with the head of a display animal(s).
- 3.5 Participants will never allow the public to take control of a display animal.
- 3.6 Participants will always demonstrate safe handling practices when in public even if these practices do not necessarily apply to this particular animal(s). Example, handler shall not allow a snake to complete a full loop around the handler's neck.
- 3.7 All lizards capable of fast movement will be harnessed while in public so as to eliminate the possibility of escape into a crowd.
- 3.8 Participants will always handle animals with respect and dignity.
- 3.9 The public will be treated respectfully at all times.
- 3.10 Participants must recognize that some people are extremely fearful of reptiles and/or amphibians. At no time will a participant attempt to force their animal on a member of the public.
- 3.11 Animals will be on display only at the display site of the event. Participants are not to enter or leave the area without first concealing their animal(s). Preferred methods would be by bagging and/or boxing.
- 3.12 Display cages, if used, must be of sturdy design and capable of being securely locked if not attended.

4.0 Failure to Comply

- 4.1 Failure to comply with sections 2 and/or 3 may result in suspension of participation privileges at MHS Hands-On Events.
- 4.2 Repeated violations per 4.1 may result in permanent loss of participation privileges at MHS Hands-On Events.
- 4.3 Suspension for failure to comply with this policy will be enforced by the event supervisor of the Public Education Coordinator.
- 4.4 Participation suspension may be appealed to the MHS Board of Directors.