



## **AUSTRALIAN ALPACA ASSOCIATION LIMITED - Social Media Code of Conduct**

Members shall at all times conduct themselves as set out in the Australian Alpaca Association (AAA) Code of Conduct dated 15 March 2018.

### **Background**

Social media has become an integral part of day to day communication for individuals as well as businesses. Social media is defined as the social interaction among people in which they create, share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks. Social media may include but is not limited to magazines, internet forums, weblogs, socialblogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks (such as Facebook or Instagram), podcasts, photographs or pictures, video, rating and social bookmarking. Technologies include blogging, picture sharing, vlogs, wall-posting, music-sharing, crowdsourcing and voice over IP. Social media's ability to capture community sentiment and shape opinions is driven by its dynamic and immediate nature.

What constitutes ethical behaviour can be somewhat ambiguous when engaging in social forums, however the AAA believes its members should uphold the highest ethical standards displaying respect, honesty and integrity. This Social Media Code of Conduct aims to provide guidelines on best practice behaviour when using social media.

### **Guidelines:**

- Abide by AAA rules & regulations
- Be reasonable and respectful – do not post malicious, misleading or unfair content in relation to the AAA, , AAA staff, AAA board, AAA members or members of other affiliated bodies or indeed of members' animals, business activities or properties,
- Be accurate – any comment posted as fact should be able to be substantiated,
- Act in a manner that is consistent with good community expectations,
- Do not provide information which could be considered veterinary advice.

The last point is complex as members often want to assist others with issues concerning their animals. Sharing is an important part of being a member of the AAA and deserves to be encouraged, however, members need to be wary of diagnosing conditions from a photo or recommending medications/dosages and where there is concern the advice should always point towards seeking professional veterinary services.

Careful phrasing can show the intent whilst not taking responsibility. Eg. "With my animals we gave XYZ and it cleared it up" as opposed to "Give them XYZ and they should be fine". Whilst the intent of both statements may have been the same, there is a subtle difference between empathy and assistance as opposed to advice.

The same values that apply in the real world also apply in the virtual world and in social media exchanges. Despite the seemingly unregulated nature of social media, the law is applicable to

online content. Postings online (and similarly in email or text messages) are subject to the law in areas such as defamation, libel, racial discrimination, intimidation and bullying.

### **Breach of the Social Media Code of Conduct**

The AAA may monitor activity in relation to the company and its members.

AAA takes compliance with this policy seriously. Where members believe that behaviour is in breach of our Constitution, Rules, Regulations or Codes and it is reported to the Region, National office personnel or board member, the disciplinary process may be initiated by the AAA board. Where proven, formal warnings or other penalties up to and including suspension of membership or expulsion may apply. Civil damages or criminal penalties may also apply to misconduct using social media.

### **Consultation or advice**

This policy has been developed to provide guidance for AAA members. Any members who are unsure about the content of this code of conduct should contact the AAA board. Members who are unsure of their rights, liabilities or actions online should seek their own independent legal advice.

**Whilst the AAA does not provide legal advice, for more information and further reading please go to:**

- <https://www.legalaid.nsw.gov.au/publications/factsheets-and-resources/online-social-networking-defamation>
- <https://www.slatergordon.com.au/blog/5-things-know-about-social-media-defamation>
- <http://www.findlaw.com.au/articles/5375/can-defamation-laws-be-applied-to-social-media-in-.aspx>
- [https://www.lavan.com.au/advice/commercial\\_corporate\\_litigation/going-viral-social-media-defamation-cases-on-the-rise](https://www.lavan.com.au/advice/commercial_corporate_litigation/going-viral-social-media-defamation-cases-on-the-rise)