



# Complaints Management Policy

## Droughtmaster Stud Breeders' Society Limited

### Introduction

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The Complaints Management Policy provides a framework for the receipt, management, resolution, and reporting of workplace issues and complaints within the Droughtmaster Stud Breeders' Society Limited (DSBS).

### 1. Objectives

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- 1.1 The DSBS is committed to the proactive management and early resolution of workplace issues and complaints in a fair, efficient, transparent, and timely manner which adhere to the principles of natural justice and privacy.
- 1.2 The DSBS recognises that effective complaints management is integral to employee, member, volunteer and non-member satisfaction, and the overall productivity of the DSBS.

### 2. Scope

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- 2.1 For the purposes of this Policy:
  - (a) Members include stud, commercial, junior, associate and life members of the DSBS.
  - (b) Volunteers include individuals that may or may not be members, who perform duties for the DSBS, or represent the DSBS in an official capacity, and do so on a voluntary basis.
  - (c) Non-members include individuals that are not members, volunteers or employees of the DSBS but engage with the DSBS in some capacity.
  - (d) Workplace issues can involve any matter that arises in, or is associated with, a DSBS workplace or work environment.
  - (e) A DSBS workplace or work environment includes any location at which DSBS business is conducted, DSBS meetings are held, and DSBS events and functions take place (in person or via technological means).
- 2.2 For the purposes of raising a workplace issue or lodging a complaint, this Policy applies to employees, members, volunteers, and non-members of the DSBS.
- 2.3 For the purposes of managing a workplace issue or complaint, this policy applies to employees and members that are responsible for, or involved with, the receipt of a complaint (the receiving officer) and/or the management of a complaint (the delegate/decision maker).
- 2.4 A workplace issue can vary in terms of the type and seriousness of the issue involved. A workplace issue is usually, but not limited to, a one-off incident or behaviour that is perceived by the complainant to be inappropriate or unfair in nature. A workplace issue, if unresolved, may escalate to a complaint.
- 2.5 A complaint can vary in terms of the type and seriousness of the issue involved. It can involve a one-off incident or behaviour of a serious nature, or repetitive incidents or repeated behaviour that is perceived by the complainant as unsatisfactory, unreasonable, inappropriate, or unfair in nature.

### **3. Policy and Principles**

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- 3.1 The DSBS acknowledges the rights of members, volunteers, employees, and others to report a workplace issue, or to complain when dissatisfied with a decision that has been made, a service that has been provided, or the conduct that has been displayed by a DSBS member, volunteer or employee.
- 3.2 Workplace issues and complaints can be made in person, verbally, or in writing via email, letter or other electronic means.
- 3.3 Subject to the nature and content of the workplace issue or complaint, the matter may be lodged anonymously or under the provisions of the DSBS Whistleblower Policy.
- 3.4 Management of workplace issues and complaints must be undertaken in a manner that protects the privacy of the complainant.
- 3.5 Workplace issues and complaints are to be managed and resolved in a fair, open and transparent manner.
- 3.6 Workplace issues and complaints are to be managed and resolved within a reasonable time.

### **4. Complaints Management Process**

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- 4.1 The framework for the receipt, management and resolution of workplace issues and complaints (the Complaints Management Process) is to be applied consistently, incorporating the following steps:
  - (a) Receipt of the complaint;
  - (b) Assessment of the complaint;
  - (c) Identify and implement actions to resolve the complaint;
  - (d) Inform the complainant of the outcome of the complaint;
  - (e) Record relevant details and outcome of the complaint in the Complaints Management Register;
  - (f) Consider the implementation of any systemic improvements in response to the complaint.

#### **Receipt of the Complainant**

- 4.2 The complainant is to be treated in a respectful and helpful manner and provided with information relevant to the process that will be applied to manage and resolve their complaint. (Reference to this policy may suffice in circumstances where the complainant can access the policy).
- 4.3 The complainant is to be acknowledged, either in person, or by telephone, letter, or email, within five (5) working days from receipt of the complaint.
- 4.4 Where required, all reasonable assistance should be provided to the complainant to assist them in making a complaint, including flexible methods of lodging the complaint.
- 4.5 When a complaint is made, the person receiving the complaint (receiving officer) must collect the following information that is relevant to the complaint:
  - name of the complainant;
  - contact details of the complainant and their preferred method of contact;
  - date of receipt of the complaint;
  - details of the complaint;

- whether the issue, the subject of the complaint, has been raised previously by the complainant and the outcome at the time;
- outcome that the complainant believes will resolve the complaint; and
- any support that the complainant may need.

4.6 The receiving officer must then forward the complaint details to the Company Secretary who will record the complaint in the DSBS Complaints Register and thereafter refer the complaint to the appropriate delegate/decision-maker.

### **Assessment of the Complaint**

4.7 There are three categories of complaints:

Category (a) complaints are generally **minor in nature** and should be resolved within 14 days following receipt of the complaint. Examples of a category (a) complaint may include a communication breakdown; a misunderstanding; or an unreasonable expectation. The management of a category (a) complaint should be timely and if possible, occur during the first interaction made by the complainant.

Category (b) complaints are **serious in nature** and are likely to require an internal investigation with an expectation that a conversation will be had with all relevant parties to the complaint. Examples of a category (b) complaint may include allegations of inappropriate conduct such as disrespectful behaviour that is inconsistent with the DSBS Code of Conduct; or making statements that are misleading; deceptive, or defamatory in nature (Refer to the *Member and Volunteer Conduct Policy – Grounds for Discipline*). The management of a category (b) complaint must be timely and ideally resolved within 30 days following receipt of the complaint.

Category (c) complaints are **profoundly serious in nature** and likely to require an investigation that may include external agencies and/or an independent investigator. Examples of a category (c) complaint may include allegations of misconduct and serious misconduct involving grossly inappropriate behaviour which has the potential to damage the effective, efficient and harmonious operation of the DSBS (see *Member and Volunteer Conduct Policy – Grounds for Discipline*). The management of a category (c) complaint must be timely and subject to the requirements of external providers and independent investigations, should be resolved within 60 days.

4.8 All complaints must be categorised and prioritised based on the information that is immediately available. Once categorised, the complaint is to be referred to the appropriate delegate/decision-maker who will be responsible for resolving the complaint within the timeframes specified.

4.9 If, during the assessment of the complaint, it becomes apparent that the delegate/decision maker who is responsible for resolving the complaint is, for any reason, unable to do so, the complaint must be re-allocated.

### **Actions to Resolve the Complaint**

4.10 Complaints are to be managed by the delegate/decision maker in a fair, objective and unbiased manner. The delegate/decision maker must:

- have no prior involvement with the matter;

- have no conflict of interest in relation to the matter; and
- be suitably trained to implement the complaints management procedures.

4.11 The delegate/decision maker is required to do the following:

- (a) Discuss the issues with the complainant in a timely manner;
- (b) Determine the outcome that the complainant is seeking;
- (c) Consider the issues that have been raised and determine the most appropriate method for managing the issues and resolving the complaint;
- (d) Keep the complainant apprised of the progress of the complaint and where unexpected delays have occurred, inform the complainant of the delays;
- (e) Take all reasonable action to resolve the complaint in accordance with the principles of natural justice; and,
- (f) Respect the confidentiality of the complaints management process and protect the identity of the complainant where it is practical to do so.

4.12 If additional information or evidence is required to properly assess and resolve the complaint, the delegate/decision maker may implement one or more of the following:

- (g) Conduct a thorough inquiry to establish all relevant facts relating to the complaint; and/or
- (h) Appoint, or recommend the appointment of an investigating officer to conduct a formal investigation into the complaint (the investigating officer may include an external provider).

#### **Inform the Complainant of the Outcome of the Complaint**

4.13 At the completion of the actions to resolve the complaint, the delegate/decision maker must advise the complainant of the following, and must do so using the most appropriate medium suitable:

- the action taken to investigate and manage the complaint;
- the decision or outcome of the complaint;
- reasons for the decision;
- any action that the DSBS will take, or proposes to take, as a result of the decision; and
- any review process that may be available to the complainant if the complainant is not satisfied with the decision.

4.14 If, following a thorough inquiry, the delegate/decision maker is reasonably satisfied that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious, the decision maker may decide not to pursue the matter further, and must notify the complainant of the decision and reasons.

#### **Record Details in the Complaints Management Register**

4.15 Upon resolution of the complaint, the delegate/decision maker must complete all relevant documentation in relation to the implementation of the complaints process, including the outcome of the complaint.

4.16 The delegate/decision maker must forward the completed documentation to the Company Secretary whereupon it will be recorded in the DSBS Complaints Register.

4.17 In addition to maintaining a record of each complaint, the data compiled in the Complaints Register can be utilised by the DSBS for analysis to:

- ensure all requirements of the complaints management process are transparent and effective;
- identify and address instances of organisational non-conformity with regulatory and legal requirements;
- identify and address potential systemic issues in the DSBS; and
- assess opportunities for improvement to the complaints management procedures.

### Review of a Decision

- 4.18 If a complainant is aggrieved or dissatisfied with the decision to resolve the complaint, the complainant may submit a request to the DSBS for a review of the decision.
- 4.19 The request for a review of the decision must be submitted within 30 days of receipt of the outcome of their complaint and must be forwarded to the Company Secretary.
- 4.20 The delegate/internal review decision maker must be provided with all relevant documentation relating to the complaint and the initial complaints management process and decision.
- 4.21 The internal review is to determine if the process and decision was fair and reasonable in the circumstances.
- 4.22 The internal review must be completed within 30 days unless extended by mutual agreement.
- 4.23 The delegate/internal review decision maker must provide a written decision to the complainant, which must include:
- details of the action taken to review the original decision;
  - the review decision and reasons;
  - details of any action that the delegate/review decision maker will take, or proposes to take, as a result of the decision.
- 4.24 Upon resolution of the matter, the delegate/internal review decision maker must forward to the Company Secretary, documentation of the review process and decision, whereupon it will be recorded in the DSBS Complaints Register.

## 5. Definitions

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<i>Compliant:</i>	A complaint can vary in terms of the type and seriousness of the issue involved. It can involve a one-off incident or behaviour of a serious nature, or repetitive incidents or repeated behaviour that is perceived by the complainant as unsatisfactory, unreasonable, inappropriate, or unfair in nature.
<i>Delegate:</i>	A person appointed to implement the process that is set out in this Complaints Management Policy to manage and decide the outcome of a complaint.
<i>Frivolous compliant:</i>	A complaint that is readily recognisable as devoid of merit and that has basically no prospect of success.
<i>Natural Justice:</i>	Fairness in decision-making. Case law that has developed over many years, requires a decision-maker that is making a decision that may affect the rights, privileges, interests, and legitimate expectations of a person, to afford that person 'natural justice'. Natural justice has two rules:

- (a) *Rule against bias* – decision makers are to be objective, free from bias, and have no personal interest in the matter being decided; and
- (b) *Hearing rule* – an individual is to be informed of the substance of any allegations against them and have the opportunity to present their case prior to a decision being made.

*Regulations:*

Regulations passed pursuant to the DSBS's constitution.

*Vexatious complaint:*

Vexatious indicates 'bad faith' in relation to a complaint. A complaint is vexatious if it is a frivolous complaint that has been lodged:

- (a) to harass or intimidate;
- (b) to cause delay;
- (c) without reasonable grounds;
- (d) for a purpose other than addressing the complaint; or
- (e) for another wrongful purpose

*Workplace Issue:*

A workplace issue can vary in terms of the type and seriousness of the issue involved. A workplace issue is usually, but not limited to, a one-off incident or behaviour that is perceived by the complainant to be inappropriate or unfair in nature. A workplace issue, if unresolved, may escalate to a complaint.

## **6. Related Documents**

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- 6.1 *Privacy Act 1998* (Cth)
- 6.2 DSBS Constitution
- 6.3 DSBS Code of Conduct
- 6.4 DSBS Member Conduct Policy
- 6.5 DSBS Bullying, Sexual Harassment and Unlawful Discrimination Policy
- 6.6 DSBS Whistleblower Policy

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