Wildlife Forensics General Standards

WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This standard provides minimum requirements and recommendations for practicing wildlife forensic analysts. It covers good laboratory practices, evidence handling, and training, as well as considerations of taxonomy and reference collections that are specific to wildlife forensic sciences.

It is designed to guide forensic science service providers (FSSPs) that are working toward meeting requirements in ISO/IEC 17025 and provides guidance and recommendations regarding protocols that must be followed by wildlife forensic analysts when conducting casework.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Wildlife forensic scientists conduct a variety of analyses on numerous wildlife species, and this standard provides requirements for testing that encompasses the diversity of techniques used by wildlife FSSPs. A uniform standard is necessary to ensure that FSSP casework is conducted using standard operating procedures (SOPs) and provides information suitable for use in court.

This standard is an important aid for helping FSSPs meet those requirements. It does not replace ISO/IEC 17025 but provides a framework for FSSPs striving to meet ISO/IEC 17025 requirements.

HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard is used as a guide to meeting requirements in wildlife forensic casework. Key elements of this standard consist of training and personnel requirements for a documented ethical code that wildlife forensic analysts follow; documented training, research, and experience appropriate to all analysts and technical reviewers; and training in chain of custody, cognitive bias, and safety.

Requirements for case documentation are outlined and must include a chain of custody, submittal request, bench notes, location of electronic data, documentation of technical and administrative review, and the final report.

In cases where taxonomic classification is involved, a curated reference database must be maintained to obtain vouchers and reference samples. Curation procedures must be documented, and current taxonomic authorities must be referenced.

Additional fundamental elements describe requirements for evidence handling and storage, performance checks or calibration of equipment use, documentation of validation studies before casework is started, and statistical methods and any related assumptions that may affect the conclusions.