

AMERICAN EMBRYO TRANSFER ASSOCIATION



CERTIFICATION PROGRAM GUIDELINES

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AMERICAN EMBRYO TRANSFER ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

PREAMBLE

The American Embryo Transfer Association (AETA) is an association of organizations and individuals engaged in the commercial practice of embryo transfer. The members of the AETA have developed this certification program to establish performance standards for the embryo transfer industry in order to enhance the public image of the industry and to ensure the accuracy and completeness of all records pertaining to the parentage of resulting offspring.

The AETA Certification Program is a voluntary program open to any qualified embryo transfer practitioner. Membership in AETA is not a prerequisite to participation in the Certification Program

I. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

- A. Embryo Transfer Business (ETB)**—An entity that for valuable consideration collects, processes, evaluates stage and quality, freezes, stores, thaws, transfers, and/or distributes embryos or oocytes as its principal business.
- B. Oocyte or Ovum**—The female gamete prior to fertilization.
- C. Embryo**—The earliest stage in the development of an individual; the stage begins at fertilization and ends with the development of organ systems.
- D. Divided Embryo**—An embryo that has been separated “in vitro” into two or more groups of cells.
- E. Practitioner**—An individual who collects embryos from donors, and processes, evaluates stage and quality, freezes, stores, thaws, and/or transfers embryos into recipients.
- F. Donor**—A female from which an embryo or oocyte is collected.
- G. Superovulation**—The release of two or more oocytes from the ovaries of a monotocous female that was treated with hormones.
- H. Breeder**—The person or firm that is the owner of record, on the records of the respective breed association, of a donor at the time the donor is bred for embryo collection. Such a person or firm will be identified as the “breeder” of the animal resulting from the transferred embryo.
- I. First Owner**—The person who owns the offspring resulting from a transferred embryo when such offspring is born.
- J. Recipient**—A female into which an embryo is transferred and that is the host to the developing embryo and subsequent fetus during gestation.
- K. Breed Registry Organization**—A breed association that maintains a herd book for recording genealogical records. Certificates of registration or certificates of identification are issued for animals that meet its respective requirements.
- L. Certified Embryo Transfer Practitioner**—An embryo transfer practitioner who has met each of the requirements set forth in the Certification Program Guidelines and which has in effect a current Operating Agreement with the AETA.
- M. Certification Program Guidelines**—This document, which provides information and requirements of the certification program of the AETA.
- N. Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)**—An individual appointed by the Board of Directors meeting the qualifications in IV, A.

II. REQUIREMENTS FOR APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATION

- A. To be eligible for certification, a practitioner must hold either (1) a doctor of veterinary medicine (DVM) or other equivalent veterinary degree with a license to practice veterinary medicine within the United States of America, or (2) a PhD with emphasis in reproductive physiology: provided that the applicant's college transcript and dissertation have been reviewed and determined to be acceptable by the Board of Directors of the AETA.
- B. The practitioner taking the examination must have performed a minimum of 50 embryo recoveries and handled 250 embryos, of which at least 100 were transferred to recipient females and at least 100 were frozen within the last 12 months. At least 25 of the collections must be superovulated conventional embryo transfer collections. The additional 25 could be either superovulated conventional collections or embryo production attempts following in vitro (OPU) collection sessions.
- C. The applicant must visit a certified practitioner and file a Colleague Visit Report with the association prior to making the application.
- D. Certification will not be granted until after an inspection has been made by a representative of the Certification Committee and the applicant demonstrates that they meet certification standards.
- E. The application must be postmarked no later than 21 days prior to the professional competence examination.
- F. The practitioner must have necessary equipment available and the knowledge to freeze and thaw embryos.
- G. The practitioner must pay an application fee, as outlined on the application.

III. REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION

A. Demonstrated Professional Competence—Examination

Only persons satisfying the educational requirements of Section II, Part A, are entitled to take the examination. Certification status is designated to a practitioner. Therefore, if an ETB has other practitioner(s) that independently perform and/or supervise embryo collection and/or processing of embryos, then they also must take and pass the Certification Examination, in order for embryos collected and processed by them to be designated under the certification guidelines. The examination may consist of two parts: A written and/or oral examination. The application fee as designated on the application form is non-refundable and will cover the initial examination and one retake if necessary.

The examination will cover the following subjects: (1) forms and labeling; (2) recovery and handling; (3) reproductive physiology, superovulation and breeding; (4) transfer and recipient management; (5) cryopreservation; (6) embryo evaluation; (7) practicum; (8) in vitro fertilization (IVF); and (9) a practical exam where the applicant will be evaluated as to their

ability to handle, grade, and process embryos. The AETA competency examination will be offered on a regular basis each fall during the AETA Annual Meeting and at the same time as the winter Board of Directors meeting. An applicant must obtain a 75% grade on all examination sections.

B. Renewal Procedures

1. Certification expires after the end of a 3-year cycle as described below. In lieu of being retested every third year, qualified practitioners that have successfully passed the AETA Certification examination may obtain 30 approved certification credits for every 3-year period following the exam in order to maintain their certified status.
2. Certification credits can be obtained from:
 - a. American Embryo Transfer Association meetings
 - b. Canadian Embryo Transfer Association meetings
 - c. International Embryo Transfer Society meetings
 - d. Special advanced embryo transfer seminars conducted by the American Association of Bovine Practitioners (AABP)
 - e. Other board pre-approved meetings, those being the Society for Theriogenology Convention and the AABP Convention.
 - f. Other meetings or seminars that are pre-approved by the Certification Committee. Under special circumstances, approval of meetings or seminars after the certified practitioner has attended these events will be considered for CE credit consideration at the discretion of the committee.
 - g. Based on the education value resulting from an informational exchange between practitioners and the opportunity to glean knowledge from visiting other embryo transfer businesses, certified visiting practitioners and certified host practitioners may apply for 5 CE credits by filing a Colleague Visit Report form with the Certification Program. These forms are available from the AETA. In order for 5 credits to be granted, these visits must be at least one full business day in duration and include an observation of embryo transfer collection and embryo processing procedures. A maximum of 10 credits may be earned by each practitioner in a 3-year cycle. A maximum of 5 credits can be earned as a host practitioner. If a practitioner wishes to earn 10 credits from colleague visits, at least 5 credits must and all 10 credits may be earned as a visiting practitioner. Inspection visits are a separate program and are not eligible to count as colleague visits.
3. Ten certification credits would be allowed for each AETA, CETA, or IETS meetings, and 5 approved credits for the other meetings listed (AABP and Theriogenology). The number of CE credits allowed under III, B, 2, f. will be determined by the Certification Committee, with the maximum credits allowed for a meeting or seminar being 5.

Certification and continuing education is on a calendar year basis starting on January 1 of that year. CE credits are credited from January 1 of the year when the 3-year cycle begins and continue until December 31 of the third year. For practitioners taking the certification exam during the annual convention of the AETA or at a time after the convention and prior to January 1 of the following year, their 3-year cycle begins on January of the following year and the yearly certification fee is first due for these individuals on January 1 of the next year. For practitioners taking the exam between January 1 and the AETA annual convention, their 3-year cycle starts with the current year. The yearly certification fee must also be paid for that year in order for their certification status to be in effect.

4. Twenty of the 30 required units must come from AETA meetings.
5. There are no rollover provisions for excessive hours over thirty hours during the 3-year cycle.
6. If currently certified practitioners are short of their 30 hours at the end of a 3-year period, they are required to retake the examination before or during January of the year immediately following the 3-year renewal period for their certification status to remain in effect. As the IETS annual convention is held in early January, a practitioner whose 3-year cycle has just been completed and is short of CE credits can attend the IETS convention and use those credits to fulfill their CE credit requirement. When certified practitioners use those credits for the just-completed cycle, these credits can only be used for the prior 3-year cycle and cannot be used for the following 3-year cycle.
7. At each yearly AETA convention, a special session would be set aside to update current certified practitioners as to the latest developments within the industry. Each certified practitioner is required to attend that session and is required to take a short graded examination to qualify for the 10 CE credits for that AETA convention.
8. Certified practitioners are required to furnish the AETA office documentation that they did attend approved meetings, other than the AETA meeting, during a given year to have that meeting count toward their CE requirements. These documents, along with the record of attendance at the required two AETA meetings, will be kept in each certified practitioner's records and used to calculate each year how many credits those practitioners had obtained. At the beginning of the third year during the renewal period, each certified practitioner would be advised as to their status of total credits earned and total credits needed to maintain their certification status at the end of the 3-year period.
9. The Certification Committee will be responsible for the development and preparation of the special sessions to update certified practitioners at each AETA annual meeting.

C. Facilities

The certified practitioner is required to ensure that the ETB with which they are associated establishes and maintains its facilities in accordance with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. If requested to do so by the AETA, the ETB must submit to inspection by the person designated by the AETA as the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) or an individual(s) appointed by the CAO of the Certification Program.

D. Recordkeeping

1. Certified practitioners are required to meet or exceed all labeling and recordkeeping requirements mandated by the IETS and AETA with respect to labeling of straws containing frozen embryos, canes, cane tabs and goblets, and are required to complete AB, AC, ABC, D or other appropriate form so that all embryos or oocytes, donor dams, sires, and recipients are adequately identified. The parentage of any possible offspring should never be in doubt. Complete registration name and number of the donor dam and sire are required to be included on official records of the embryo transfer. Certified practitioners are required to use IETS guidelines when assigning a grade and stage designation to the embryos. Recipients must be adequately identified to meet breed requirements and to ensure proper identity of resulting offspring.
2. Any treatments, such as the division of an embryo or biopsy and sex determination, must be recorded and these records maintained and submitted to breed associations when required.
3. All records pertaining to the embryo must be maintained for at least 6 years from the date of sale or transfer.
4. Certified practitioners, and the ETB with which they are associated, shall, upon the reasonable request of the CAO, make their non-financial records available for inspection by the CAO or an individual(s) appointed by the CAO.
5. Certified practitioners shall make pertinent records available to a breed registry organization that has encountered a problem in connection with the identification and/or parentage of an embryo or animal involving a transfer made by them or their ETB.

E. Parentage Verification

The practitioner should inform the owners of donor dams that it is the owner's responsibility to ensure that any breed association requirements regarding parentage verification are met. If the certified practitioner assumes responsibility for the collection of samples used for parentage verification, a registered animal must be positively identified at the time these samples are taken.

F. Operating Agreement

In order to become a certified practitioner and to maintain that designation, a certified practitioner must enter into an Operating Agreement, on an annual basis, with AETA using the form provided by the AETA

G. Reports for Statistic Committee

Certified practitioners are required to complete and submit an accurate report to the Statistic Committee each year in a timely manner. If the report is not received by the committee within 30 days of the due date, the Board will contact the practitioner by letter reminding that individual of the requirement to file the report. If the report is then not received by 60 days following the due date, the certification status of that practitioner will be suspended until the report is received by the committee.

IV. CERTIFICATION PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

A. The Chief Administrative Officer

The Certification Program shall be administered by the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). The CAO shall be the chairperson of the certification committee and is appointed by the AETA president and approved by the Board of Directors. The CAO may utilize or appoint qualified professional assistants to assist in the performance of the CAO's duties.

B. Certification Applications

The CAO shall be responsible for determining whether the application meets the requirements set forth in Section II and III. If those requirements are met, the application shall be approved by the CAO. The CAO may request documentary evidence sufficient to establish entitlement to certification from any applicant. Certification applications shall be either approved or denied within forty-five (45) days of receipt by the CAO. The CAO's response to an application shall be in writing and mailed to the applicant. Denials, setting forth the reason or reasons for denial, shall be mailed by certified mail. The appeal procedures set forth in Section IV, E shall apply to denials of certification applications. The CAO shall maintain permanently all records relating to certification applications.

C. Certification Renewals

Once a practitioner is certified, the certification shall continue until the Operating Agreement with AETA is terminated or expired. An Operating Agreement must be renewed on an annual basis by submission, effective December 31 of each year, of a Certification Renewal Application accompanied by the stated annual renewal fee. A practitioner whose certification has lapsed must reapply for certification. (See Requirements for Certification III sub-section B, for renewal procedures.)

D. Inspection and Noncompliance

The CAO or others under the direction of the CAO and the Board of Directors may conduct an inspection of a certified practitioner's facilities and/or records.

1. **NEWLY CERTIFIED:** All newly certified individuals will have an inspection of their facilities and embryo transfer practices during the year following their initial certification.
2. **RANDOM:** Inspections of any certified practitioner's ETB may be done at any time under the direction of the Board of Directors and the CAO.
3. **COMPLIANCE:** Upon receipt of credible information suggesting that the practitioner does not comply with the requirements for AETA certification, the CAO will inspect or appoint an individual or individuals to inspect a certified practitioner's facilities and records. Following a compliance inspection, the CAO shall forward to the certified practitioner a written report finding either (1) that the inspection has not revealed areas of noncompliance with the requirements for AETA certification, or (2) that the certified practitioner does not comply with those requirements. The specific reasons for noncompliance, as well as copies of all documents evidencing such noncompliance, shall be included in the written report. Reports concluding that the

certified practitioner is not in compliance shall be mailed to the practitioner by certified mail and shall include a finding either (1) that the certified practitioner shall be given thirty (30) days within which to correct the deficiency, or (2) that the practitioner's Operating Agreement shall be terminated, absent an appeal, thirty (30) days after receipt of the written report by the certified practitioner. The CAO shall give the certified practitioner an opportunity to correct the deficiency prior to finding that termination of the Operating Agreement is required if, in the opinion of the CAO, the deficiency is minor, inadvertent or correctable. Certified practitioner whose Operating Agreements have been terminated for cause may reapply for AETA certification, but no certification will be granted without a prior inspection of the practitioner's facilities and records by the CAO.

E. Appeal Procedure

A certified practitioner may appeal a denial of its certification application or a CAO finding that its Operating Agreement should be terminated by filing with the CAO, within thirty (30) days of receipt of the CAO decision, a Notice of Appeal in the form attached. A Notice of Appeal will not be deemed "filed" until a fully completed form, including the certified practitioner's mailing address, is received at the AETA offices. The appeal will be heard by the AETA Board of Directors in person or by telephone. A certified practitioner's Operating Agreement shall not be terminated while an appeal is pending. Upon receipt of the Notice of Appeal, the CAO shall transmit to the Board of Directors copies of the Notice of Appeal, the complete written report and all evidence upon which the decision was based. The Board of Directors shall give the appealing party at least thirty (30) days written notice of the date, time, and location of the hearing. At the hearing, the appealing party may be represented by counsel and shall be permitted to offer evidence. A majority of the Board of Directors must be present in person or by telephone in order for the hearing to go forward. Counsel for AETA shall be present at any such hearing. The sole official record of all appeal hearings shall be that produced in a manner approved by the Board of Directors. An effort to maintain the confidentiality of the proceedings will be made by all of the involved parties but the Board shall be permitted to investigate and confirm facts. At the close of the hearing, those members of the Board of Directors who are present shall meet in executive session to decide the appeal by applying the facts to the stated requirements for AETA certification. The Board decision either to affirm or to reverse the CAO must be made by a majority of those Board members present. A written Board decision, including a statement of the reasons for the decision, shall be filed with the CAO within fifteen (15) days of the hearing. The CAO shall, within ten (10) days of the receipt of the Board decision, mail a copy thereof to the certified practitioner. If the Board affirms the CAO finding either that a certification application was properly denied or that a certified practitioner's Operating Agreement should be terminated: (1) The CAO mailing to the certified practitioner shall be by certified mail, and (2) a termination shall become effective ten (10) days after the mailing of the decision. Should the Board reverse the CAO's decision, the Board decision shall have immediate effect. Certified practitioners appealing CAO decisions to the Board of Directors shall be required to pay an appeal fee. All fee amounts are subject to change by the AETA Board of Directors. Except for the appeal fee paid by the practitioner, each party shall bear its own costs in any appeal proceedings.