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# Collections Care Policy

**This policy applies to** all employees at the Natural History Museum of Denmark (NHMD), contractors, associates, students, and volunteers. Sections of this policy also apply to formal visitors and users of the collections, particularly in respect to Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and events.

This policy was approved by the Board of Directors 2 May 2023 and shall remain in place until a revision is issued by the Deputy Director for Collections.

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# Collections Care Policy

## 1. Overview of Policy

- (a) This policy guides the care and conservation of the NHMD collections, and the care of specimens entrusted to the museum through loans and deposits. The policy does not apply to the Living Collections in the Botanical Garden. This collection is treated separately. The document ensures that the NHMD fulfils its responsibility in relation to the long-term care and conservation of the collections. The policy details the NHMD approach to
- The monitoring of the condition of the collections
  - The management of environmental conditions, pest management and standards for collections storage to improve the preservation conditions
  - Best practice in the care and conservation of the collections
  - Risk and collections management
  - How conservation, good environmental management, storage, and display can improve access to the collections
- (b) All conservation and preparation processes should follow appropriate sector standards and best practice. These include ethical guidelines as laid down by the *ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums* (2017), *ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums* (2013) and the guidelines given by ICOM's Committee for Conservation.
- (c) Where the ICOM standards document does not have guidance for a particular activity then an appropriate alternative standard will be used to provide an ethical guideline.

## 2. Preventive Conservation

Preventive conservation techniques aim to avoid and minimise the future deterioration or loss of the scientific or historical value of a specimen. Preventative conservation is indirect; the process does not alter the materials, structure of the specimens, or modify their appearance.

- (a) The NHMD is committed to achieving best practice in preventive conservation and ensuring that collections are stored in an environment that best preserves the specimens and their holistic data.
- (b) Generally, the most critical storage environment concerns are:
- Temperature
  - Relative humidity
  - Light
  - Contaminants (Pollutants)
  - Pests

Taken together, these five factors establish the overall quality of the storage environment and displays.

- (c) The NHMD will preserve the collections and related materials and data sets so that they are available to the range of museum users that utilize the collections.
- (d) The NHMD will as far as possible meet the environmental, storage and display standards and general guidelines as recommended by Slots- og Kulturstyrelsen (The Agency for Culture and Palaces), Danish Ministry of Culture.
- (e) New collection preservation techniques and materials will be reviewed prior to use and tested when necessary.

- (f) The NHMD will provide adequate resources to ensure that specimens in the NHMD collections are stored and displayed in a stable and suitable environment, thereby maintaining the resource they bring to the NHMD.
- (g) All staff involved in collections care, preservation and handling also receive training in-house.
- (h) All staff should receive training courses with relation to collections care, including security measures.

#### 2.1 Monitoring and Control

- (a) Agents of deterioration will be monitored in each collection and relevant data will be stored and managed centrally by the conservators or collections managers responsible for preventive conservation.
- (b) The museum conservators and collections managers will manage and report on data collated on the museum environment (including IPM).
- (c) Periodic condition surveys will be undertaken to confirm the suitability of the collection storage and environment.

#### 2.2 Documentation

- (a) All preventive conservation information including specimen condition will be recorded.
- (b) All environmental data will be recorded and managed, using an electronic environmental monitoring system.

#### 2.3 Surveys and Risk

- (a) The condition of the NHMD collections facilities will be surveyed every second year by trained collections management and/or facilities team.
- (b) All data generated by the surveys will be recorded in an appropriate electronic system.
- (c) All items must have a condition report produced and recorded in the CMS prior to any interventive process being undertaken on them.

### 3. Interventive Processes

Interventive treatments are processes directly applied to specimens that are fragile or are actively deteriorating and are used to arrest ongoing damage or reinforce the specimen's structure. Interventive treatments may sometimes modify the appearance of the specimen.

- (a) All interventive processes must abide with all local, regional, national and EU Health and Safety regulations.
- (b) All processes undertaken must minimize loss of data from the specimen.
- (c) An interventive procedure regarded as a destructive or invasive technique must fully comply with the Section 12 of the *Collections Development Policy* on Destructive and Invasive Sampling. The procedure must also comply with the provisions of the Health and Safety at Work Policy of the University of Copenhagen, and all relevant NHMD health and safety guidelines must be observed. Advice from the NHMD Standing Committee on Work Environment (AMU) should be sought when setting up work protocols.
- (d) Certain practices (e.g., plant mounting, freezing, insect pinning) are basic methods of stabilisation or are required preparation techniques for use of a specimen.
- (e) When the specimen is not owned by, or is not clearly designated as, the responsibility of the NHMD (e.g., specimens of research or exhibition loan), then written permission for interventive work to be undertaken on a specimen must be obtained from the owner of the specimen.
- (f) Individuals carrying out interventive work must have undertaken the relevant training in the task they are working in. The collections management is responsible for ensuring that the staff have this fulfilled training.

#### **4. Integrated Pest Management (IPM)**

The management of risk to the collections from pests (e.g., insects and rodents) is integral to the preventative conservation strategy of the NHMD.

##### **4.1. General Statements**

- (a) In accordance with health and safety legislation of the University of Copenhagen, the NHMD will seek an alternative to pesticides, in order to protect the collections against pest attack and contamination.
- (b) NHMD is committed to achieving best practice in IPM, wherever possible, by conforming to IPM procedures.
- (c) Every person who works at the NHMD is responsible for being aware of the threat to collections items posed by insects and rodent pests. Furthermore, their activities (specifically collections management, scientific research, operating as a visitor attraction, and income generation, e.g., functions) will be conducted in a manner that minimizes the risk of pest ingress, attack, infestation, and contamination.
- (d) Every area in the NHMD will have a procedure and schedule for cleaning, inspection, and monitoring of pests, with control mechanisms to ensure that all risks from pests are maintained at a minimum level. Accordingly, food and beverages are only permitted in designated areas.

##### **4.2. Treatments**

- (a) All pest treatments will comply with the appropriate legislation.
- (b) Pest treatment undertaken will be recorded, as appropriate.

##### **4.3. Object Entry, Object Exit and Loans**

- (a) All collections specimens associated collections materials and loans considered a pest risk will enter the NHMD sites via a quarantine facility, or via another recognized entry point, where they will be subject to inspection and an appropriate pest treatment if necessary.
- (b) It is preferable that all pest treatment exposures are registered for each individual specimen or lot.
- (c) Where specimens from the collections of the NHMD are loaned outside the institution, the host institution is required to protect the specimens from pest attack by following in-house IPM standards.

##### **4.4. Training and Supervision**

- (a) Appropriate information, supervision and training will be provided to all collections staff on pest prevention and control.
- (b) All staff, students and contractors on site should undertake the level of IPM training appropriate to their work.
- (c) The implementation of these training procedures is the responsibility of the collections management.

##### **4.5. Documentation**

Recordkeeping is essential for a successful IPM program.

- (a) All pest identifications are documented by appointed collections managers, conservators, or other designated staff to keep track of the pests.
- (b) The records of the inspection results will be electronically registered by the appointed IPM staff.

#### **5. Internal Display Policy**

This section sets out principles for how the NHMD displays items and their labelling within its galleries and exhibitions.

##### **5.1. General Statements**

- (a) This policy applies to all displays created by or held in the NHMD that include specimens that belong to the NHMD collections or borrowed from external lenders.
- (b) This section should be read in conjunction with the NHMD Collections Access Policy.
- (c) The NHMD will undertake due diligence activities to ensure that specimens are displayed in accordance with relevant legislation, permits and CITES restrictions.

#### 5.2 Security and Environmental Issues

- (a) Security for exhibition spaces, both within the NHMD and for travelling exhibitions, will follow the general NHMD security measures.
- (b) Physical security measures within the NHMD are designed to prevent unauthorized or unescorted access to specimens within the collections.
- (c) Exhibition areas must normally be able to be secured and alarmed, outside of opening hours.
- (d) There shall be a strict documented procedure on key control for the galleries and the display cases.
- (e) Physical security measures for specimens from the NHMD collections that are on display will be decided on a risk assessment basis. The relevant collections manager, curator, and/or conservator will undertake this assessment.
- (f) Physical access to specimens on display shall be kept as simple as possible without compromising security.
- (g) Environmental monitoring equipment shall be provided in all exhibition spaces to monitor the temperature, relative humidity, and light levels in the spaces and individual cases/objects, as deemed necessary.

#### 5.3 Installation and Maintenance of Exhibitions

- (a) All design, installation and activities undertaken in exhibition spaces shall comply with the written policies and procedures on environmental monitoring and IPM.
- (b) Exhibition staff will work with relevant curators, conservators, and collections managers to ensure that collections and facilities stakeholders are informed and engaged. The exhibition staff will ensure that all borrowed specimens have individual specifications for appropriate support and display.
- (c) Materials and techniques used in the construction of exhibitions, in particular display cases and mounts, will be approved by the designated staff, and must comply with both environmental as well as security standards of the NHMD.
- (d) During installation and deinstallation of temporary exhibitions, the gallery will be deemed a building site and must be protected accordingly. The levels of security required during installation and deinstallation of loans or collections specimens will depend on the risks to the specimens concerned, or on any security requirements given in the incoming loan agreements with the lenders.

### **6. Collections Rescue and Recovery**

The NHMD collections, as well as the exhibitions, are situated at different locations. Therefore, the emergency preparedness and disaster planning vary from location to location.

- (a) Curators and collections managers are responsible for identifying and placing type collections, rarities, and valuable specimens for emergency rescue, as deemed necessary.
- (b) The exhibition conservator is responsible for emergency preparedness at the location of the temporary exhibitions.
- (c) The registrar is responsible for preparing a rescue plan prioritized by value for the temporary exhibitions exhibits.

### **7. Events at the NHMD**

The NHMD uses its different locations for a variety of events in relation to the permanent exhibitions, the temporary exhibitions, the university, as well as more commercial activities.

- (a) These activities should not put specimens on display at risk. This includes but is not restricted to:
- Specimens from the collections may not be displayed without the authorisation of the relevant curator, who is responsible for assessing any risks to the use of the proposed specimens. This task includes the liaison with security, registry, and conservation to ensure that appropriate levels of mitigation are in place.
  - Certain specimens may require additional security, which should be decided by the relevant curator or collections manager.
  - There must be no changes to the display infrastructure of the exhibition gallery without discussion with the relevant staff.
  - Food and drinks are not allowed in the exhibition galleries when specimens are on display.
  - If events take place in empty exhibition galleries, it is imperative that these galleries are cleaned no later than the day after the event has taken place, to minimize the risk of pests.
  - Candles, fuel or any other flammable or dangerous objects including the use of indoor pyrotechnics, are not permitted.
  - The storage, preparation, cleaning, and disposal of waste food must be done in a way that minimizes the risk to the collections through pests.
  - Lighting, music, and staging should not increase the risk to specimens, for example through increased ultraviolet light, vibration, or the use of any materials such as cracked oil/dry ice to create smoke.
- (b) All events that involve bringing specimens into the galleries specifically for an event must have a procedure to secure or evacuate specimens if an emergency arises during or following the event.
- (c) All events in the exhibition galleries should be cleared with the relevant staff.
- (d) Notification of damage to any collections material that occurred during an event must be reported to the relevant curator or collections manager.
- (e) The NHMD has a special duty of care to specimens on loan from other institutions. There may be a condition of a loan or general policy on IPM that prohibits the consumption of food or drink in the gallery where the loan is displayed. Additional controls may also be placed on borrowed specimens through the incoming loan agreement with the lender.
- (f) It is the responsibility of the organiser of any event that takes place at any of the NHMD's visitor addresses, and which includes foods or drinks, to ensure that extra cleaning is done as soon as possible after the event has taken place due to the risk of pests.
- (g) The use of flowers and plants is described separately in the *Flowers and Plants for Events at the Natural History Museum of Denmark. Directions for Suppliers*.
- (h) Directions for events in the Botanical Garden are described separately in the Living Collections Policy.

## 8. Management of Risk to the Collections

The NHMD collections are used for a variety of purposes. It is acknowledged that the resources available for managing risk are finite, and that not all risks to collections specimens can be avoided. The purpose of managing risk is to keep the rate of loss of collections value at an optimum low value. Managing risks to the collections require appropriate assessments, which are then prioritized based on resource constraints. All staff are responsible for monitoring risks to items held by the NHMD, or on loan from other institutions.

### 8.1. General Statements

Risk management is the overall process of risk assessment, communication, analysis, evaluation, and control.

- (a) Risk management is embedded within the general collections management, which includes collections risks connected with
- Display, mounting and handling

- Collections storage and conservation
- Registry, management policies and procedures
- Data and digitisation
- Collections development
- Research

- (b) Project risks that affect collections (e.g., for new temporary, touring, or permanent exhibitions or new storage) are considered at each project gateway.
- (c) The assessment of collections risk will take into account the agents of collections deterioration:

- Physical forces (e.g., vibration, impact, or interactions by visitors)
- Fire
- Water
- Pests
- Contaminants or pollutants (e.g., dust, smoke, or aerosols)
- Light, ultraviolet, and infrared radiation (e.g., light, and solar gain)
- Incorrect temperature (e.g., large fluctuations in temperature)
- Incorrect relative humidity (RH) (e.g., large fluctuations in humidity levels)
- Thieves and vandals
- Dissociation
- Inherent instability (e.g., oxidation)
- Handling of the specimens (e.g., in connection with loans or exhibits)

Reputational, security, legal and financial risks will also be considered.

- (d) The collections include specimens that may be inherently hazardous due to their natural composition, or that may contain residual pesticide and preservative chemicals. Prior to undertaking work on specimens, that are known or suspected to be hazardous, the conservator, curator, or collections manager will make an assessment of the risks.

## 8.2 Training

Training will be provided in risk management and assessment for relevant staff.

## 8.3 Documentation

Risk management reports and documentation must be available on the intranet.

## 9. Costs

The NHMD reserves the right to recover the costs associated with any damage incurred to specimens in the collections due to wilful negligence or disregard for this policy.

## 10. Policy Review Procedure

The Collections Care Policy will be reviewed at least once every five years to maintain its validity and usefulness as a guide for the museum staff and Board of Directors. The Deputy Director for Collections will submit proposed revisions to the Board of Directors for final approval.

**Name of governing body:** Board of Directors, Natural History Museum of Denmark

**Date of approval by governing body:** 2 May 2023

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** 2 May 2028