

Publication Ethics of the Agrobiological Records

Introduction

The Agrobiological Records (ABRs) is quarterly Journal (January-March; April-June; July-September; October-December) published by the [Unique Scientific Publishers](#). This journal publishes original research papers, reviews, clinical articles/case reports and short communications in the area of agriculture, veterinary, animal sciences and allied disciplines. The ABRs publishes the articles/manuscripts those contribute significantly to the knowledge in the field of agrobiological sciences. Preference is given to the original articles that develop new concepts or experimental approaches and are not merely repositories of scientific data.

1. PUBLISHING ETHICS

The formal part of the scholarly communication system, the publication of an article in a peer-reviewed learned journal, serves many purposes outside of simple communication. It is a building block in developing a rational and respected knowledge network. It is prima facie evidence for the quality and impact of the research work of its authors and, by extension, the institutions that support them. It supports and is itself an example of the scientific method. For all these reasons and more, it is important to lay down standards of expected ethical behavior by all parties involved in publishing: the author, the journal editor, the peer reviewer, and the publisher. This includes all parties treating each other with respect and dignity and without discrimination, harassment, bullying, or retaliation.

These guidelines are designed specifically for primary research journals but may also be relevant for review and other professional publications. Individual journals often have more elaborate or distinct ethical procedures, generally reflected in their Guide for Authors. Many journals also accept and are, in many cases founding participants concerning discipline-specific standards or standard-setting bodies, such as the International Council of Medical Journal Editors ([ICMJE](#)) and Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials ([CONSORT](#)). The ethical requirements for publishers, editors, reviewers, and authors include but are not limited to the following:

- 1.1. **Publisher:** We require publishers to promote and comply with industry best practices. The publisher shall provide editors with technical, procedural, and legal support and ensure their editorial decisions are independent and not affected by any other factors.
- 1.2. **Editors:** The editors shall follow the industry best practice, including but not limited to ensuring the editorial decisions they make and the peer review process are fair, unbiased, and timely.
- 1.3. **Reviewers:** Reviewers shall assist the editors in making editorial decisions and may also assist the author in improving the paper. Reviews should be conducted objectively, and reviewers are responsible for ensuring the review process is fair, unbiased, and timely.
- 1.4. **Authors:** The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works and should not, in general, publish manuscripts describing essentially the same research in more than one journal.

2. ANIMAL RIGHTS

Does your research involve experimentation on animals? Please provide the name of the ethical committee approving these experiments and confirm the authors' compliance with all relevant ethical regulations.

3. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors are requested to disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest, including any financial, personal, or other relationships with other people or organizations, within three years of beginning the submitted work that could inappropriately influence, or be perceived to influence, their work.

4. DUTIES OF THE UNIQUE SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHERS

4.1. Guardianship of the scholarly record

These guidelines have been written with all these requirements in mind but especially recognizing that it is an important role of the publisher to support the huge efforts made by journal editors and the often unsung volunteer work undertaken by peer reviewers in maintaining the integrity of the scholarly record. Although ethical codes

inevitably concentrate on the infractions that sometimes occur, it is a tribute to scholarly practice that the system works so well and that problems are comparatively rare. The publisher has a supporting, investing, and nurturing role in the scholarly communication process but is ultimately responsible for ensuring that best practice is followed in its publications ([STM](#); [COPE Codes of Conduct](#)).

The [Unique Scientific Publishers](#) takes its duties of guardianship over the scholarly record seriously. Our journals record "the minutes of science," and we recognize our responsibilities as the keeper of those "minutes" in all our policies, not least the ethical guidelines we have adopted here.

The [Unique Scientific Publishers](#) is adopting these policies and procedures to support editors, reviewers, and authors in performing their ethical duties under these guidelines. We work with other publishers and industry associations to set standards for best practices on ethical matters, errors, and retractions.

4.2. Safeguard editorial independence

We are committed to ensuring that the potential for advertising, reprint, or other commercial revenue has no impact or influence on editorial decisions.

4.3. Collaborate to set industry best practice

We promote best practices by opting for the Committee on Publication Ethics ([COPE](#)) guidelines and providing editors with Crossref/Turnitin Similarity Check reports for all submissions to our editorial systems.

4.4. Provide editors with technical, procedural & legal support

We support editors in communications with other journals or publishers where this is useful to editors and are prepared to provide specialized legal review and counsel if necessary.

4.5. Educate researchers on publishing ethics

We also provide extensive education and advice on publishing ethics standards, particularly for early career researchers, by conducting various workshops in institutions.

5. DUTIES OF EDITORS

5.1. Publication decisions

The editor of a learned journal is solely and independently responsible for deciding which of the articles submitted to the journal should be published. The validation of the work in question and its importance to researchers and readers must always underwrite such decisions. The editor may be guided by the policies of the journal's editorial board and constrained by such legal requirements as shall then be in force regarding issues such as libel, copyright infringement, and plagiarism. The editor may confer with other editors or reviewers in making these decisions.

5.2. Peer review

The editor shall ensure that the peer-review process is fair, unbiased, and timely. At least two external and independent reviewers must typically review research articles; where necessary, the editor should seek additional opinions.

The editor shall select reviewers with suitable expertise in the relevant field, considering the need for appropriate, inclusive, and diverse representation. The editor shall follow best practices to avoid the selection of fraudulent peer reviewers ([WAME Best Practice](#)). The editor shall review all disclosures of potential conflicts of interest and suggestions for self-citation made by reviewers to determine whether there is any potential for bias.

5.3. Fair play

The editor should evaluate manuscripts for their intellectual content without regard to the authors' race, gender, sexual orientation, religious belief, ethnic origin, citizenship, or political philosophy. When nominating potential editorial board members, the editor shall consider the need for appropriate, inclusive, and diverse representation.

The journal's editorial policies should encourage transparency and complete, honest reporting, and the editor should ensure that peer reviewers and authors clearly understand what is expected of them. The editor shall use the journal's standard electronic submission system for all communications. The editor shall establish, along with the publisher, a transparent mechanism for appeal against editorial decisions.

5.4. Journal metrics

The editor must not attempt to influence the journal's ranking by artificially increasing any journal metric. In particular, the editor shall not require that references to that (or any other) journal's articles be included except for genuine scholarly reasons, and authors should not be required to include references to the editor's articles or products and services in which the editor has an interest.

5.5. Confidentiality

The editor must protect the confidentiality of all material submitted to the journal and all communications with reviewers unless otherwise agreed with the relevant authors and reviewers. In exceptional circumstances and in consultation with the publisher, the editor may share limited information with editors of other journals where necessary to investigate suspected research misconduct ([COPE Guidelines](#)).

Unless the journal operates an open peer-review system and/or reviewers have agreed to disclose their names, the editor must protect reviewers' identities.

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in an editor's own research without the author's express written consent. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be confidential and not used for personal advantage.

5.6. Declaration of Competing Interests

Any potential editorial conflicts of interest should be declared to the publisher before the editor's appointment and updated if and when new conflicts arise. The publisher may publish such declarations in the journal.

The editor must not be involved in decisions about papers which s/he has written him/herself or have been written by family members or colleagues or related to products or services in which the editor has an interest. Further, any such submission must be subject to all of the journal's usual procedures, peer review must be handled independently of the relevant author/editor and their research groups, and there must be a clear statement to this effect on any such paper that is published. The editor shall apply [the Unique Scientific Publishers](#) policy relating to disclosing potential conflicts of interest by authors and reviewers, e.g., the [ICMJE guidelines](#).

5.7. Vigilance over the Published Record

The editor should work to safeguard the integrity of the published record by reviewing and assessing reported or suspected misconduct (research, publication, reviewer, and editorial) in conjunction with the publisher.

Such measures will generally include contacting the author of the manuscript or paper and giving due consideration to the respective complaint or claims made but may also include further communications to the relevant institutions and research bodies. The editor shall make proper use of the publisher's systems to detect misconduct, such as plagiarism.

An editor presented with convincing evidence of misconduct should coordinate with the publisher to arrange the prompt publication of a correction, retraction, expression of concern, or other correction to the record, as may be relevant.

6. DUTIES OF REVIEWERS

6.1. Contribution to Editorial Decisions

Peer review assists the editor in making editorial decisions, and the editorial communications with the author may also assist the author in improving the paper. Peer review is essential to formal scholarly communication and lies at the heart of the scientific method. In addition to the specific ethics-related duties described below, reviewers are asked to treat authors and their work as they would like to be treated and observe good reviewing etiquette.

Any selected referee who feels unqualified to review the research reported in a manuscript or knows its prompt review will be impossible should notify the editor and decline to participate in the review process.

6.2. Confidentiality

Any manuscripts received for review must be treated as confidential documents. Reviewers must not share the review or information about the paper with anyone or contact the authors directly without permission from the editor.

Some editors encourage discussion with colleagues or co-reviewing exercises. Still, reviewers should discuss this with the editor to ensure that confidentiality is observed and that participants receive suitable credit.

Unpublished materials disclosed in a submitted manuscript must not be used in a reviewer's own research without the author's express written consent. Privileged information or ideas obtained through peer review must be confidential and not used for personal advantage.

6.3. Alertness to Ethical Issues

A reviewer should be alert to potential ethical issues in the paper and bring these to the editor's attention, including any substantial similarity or overlap between the manuscript under consideration and any other published paper of which the reviewer has personal knowledge. The relevant citation should accompany any statement that had previously reported observation, derivation, or argument.

6.4. Standards of Objectivity & Competing Interests

Reviewers should conduct reviews objectively. Reviewers should be aware of personal bias and consider this when reviewing a paper. Personal criticism of the author is inappropriate. Referees should express their views clearly with supporting arguments.

Reviewers should consult the editor before agreeing to review a paper where they have potential conflicts of interest resulting from competitive, collaborative, or other relationships or connections with any of the authors, companies, or institutions connected to the papers.

Suppose a reviewer suggests that an author includes citations to the reviewer's (or their associates') work. In that case, this must be for genuine scientific reasons and not to increase the reviewer's citation count or enhance the visibility of their work (or that of their associates).

7. DUTIES OF AUTHORS

7.1. Reporting Standards

Authors of reports of original research should present an accurate account of the work performed and an objective discussion of its significance. Underlying data should represent accurately in the paper. A paper should contain sufficient detail and references to permit others to replicate the work. Fraudulent or knowingly inaccurate statements constitute unethical behavior and are unacceptable.

Review and professional publication articles should be accurate and objective and clearly identify editorial 'opinion' works.

7.2. Data Access and Retention

Authors may be asked to provide the research data supporting their paper for editorial review and/or to comply with the open data requirements of the journal. Authors should be prepared to provide public access to such data, if practicable, and should be prepared to retain such data for a reasonable number of years after publication. Authors may refer to their journal's Guide for Authors for further details.

7.3. Originality and Acknowledgement of Sources

The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used the work and/or words of others, that this has been appropriately cited or quoted, and permission has been obtained where necessary.

Proper acknowledgment of the work of others must always be given. Authors should cite publications that have influenced the reported work and give the work appropriate context within the larger scholarly record. Information obtained privately, as in conversation, correspondence, or discussion with third parties, must not be used or reported without explicit, written permission from the source.

Plagiarism takes many forms, from 'passing off' another's paper as the author's own paper to copying or paraphrasing substantial parts of another's paper (without attribution) to claiming results from research conducted by others. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical behavior and is unacceptable.

7.4. Multiple, Redundant, or Concurrent Publication

An author should not generally publish manuscripts describing the same research in more than one journal or primary publication. Submitting the same manuscript to more than one journal concurrently constitutes unethical behavior and is unacceptable.

In general, an author should not submit for consideration in another journal a paper that has been published previously, except in the form of an abstract, as part of a published lecture or academic thesis, or as an electronic preprint.

Publication of some kinds of articles (e.g., clinical guidelines, translations) in more than one journal is sometimes justifiable, provided certain conditions are met. The authors and editors of the journals concerned must agree to the secondary publication, which must reflect the same data and interpretation of the primary document. The primary

reference must be cited in the secondary publication. Further detail on acceptable forms of secondary publication can be found in the [ICMJE](#).

7.5. Confidentiality

Information obtained in the course of confidential services, such as refereeing manuscripts or grant applications, must not be used without the explicit written permission of the author of the work involved in these services.

7.6. Authorship of the Paper

Authorship should be limited to those who have contributed significantly to the conception, design, execution, or interpretation of the reported study. All those who have made substantial contributions should be listed as co-authors.

The acknowledgments section should recognize others who have participated in certain substantive aspects of the paper (e.g., language editing or medical writing).

The corresponding author should ensure that all appropriate co-authors and no inappropriate co-authors are included in the paper and that all co-authors have seen and approved the final version of the paper and have agreed to its submission for publication.

Authors are expected to consider the list and order of authors carefully before submitting their manuscript and provide the definitive list of authors at the time of the original submission. Only in exceptional circumstances will the editor consider (at their discretion) the addition, deletion, or rearrangement of authors after the manuscript has been submitted, and the author must flag any such request to the editor. All authors must agree with any such addition, removal, or rearrangement.

Authors take collective responsibility for the work. Each individual author is accountable for ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Individual journals may have particular definitions of authorship, e.g., medical journals may follow the [ICMJE](#) definition of authorship, and authors should ensure that they comply with the policies of the relevant journal.

7.7. Hazards and Animal Subjects

If the work involves chemicals, procedures, or equipment that have any unusual hazards inherent in their use, the author must identify these in the manuscript.

Suppose the work involves the use of animal or human subjects. In that case, the author should ensure that the manuscript contains a statement that all procedures comply with relevant laws and institutional guidelines and that the appropriate institutional committee(s) have approved them. Authors should include a statement in the manuscript that informed consent was obtained for experimentation with human subjects. The privacy rights of human subjects must always be observed.

All animal experiments should comply with the [ARRIVE guidelines](#) and should be carried out in accordance with the UK Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986 and associated guidelines ([UK Animal Act 1986](#)) or EU Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes ([EU Directive 2010](#)), or the US Public Health Service Policy on Humane Care and Use of Laboratory Animals and, as applicable, the [Animal Welfare Act](#).

7.8. Declaration of Competing Interests

WAME defines conflict of interest as “a divergence between an individual's private interests (competing interests) and his or her responsibilities to scientific and publishing activities, such that a reasonable observer might wonder if the individual's behavior or judgment was motivated by considerations of his or her competing interests” ([WAME Editorial statement on COI](#)). All authors should disclose in their manuscript any financial and personal relationships with other people or organizations that could be viewed as inappropriately influencing (bias) their work.

All sources of financial support for the conduct of the research and/or preparation of the article should be disclosed, as should the role of the sponsor(s), if any, in study design; in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data; in the writing of the report; and in the decision to submit the article for publication. This should be stated if the funding source(s) had no such involvement.

Examples of potential conflicts of interest which should disclose include employment, consultancies, stock ownership, honoraria, paid expert testimony, patent applications/registrations, and grants or other

funding. Potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed at the earliest possible stage ([WAME Editorial statement on COI](#)).

7.9. Notification of Fundamental Errors

When an author discovers a significant error or inaccuracy in their own published work, it is the author's obligation to promptly notify the journal editor or publisher and cooperate with the editor to retract or correct the paper if deemed necessary by the editor. Suppose the editor or the publisher learns from a third party that a published work contains an error. In that case, it is the obligation of the author to cooperate with the editor, including providing evidence to the editor where requested.

7.10. Image Integrity

It is not acceptable to enhance, obscure, move, remove, or introduce a specific feature within an image. Adjustments of brightness, contrast, or color balance are acceptable if and as long as they do not obscure or eliminate any information present in the original. Manipulating images for improved clarity is accepted, but manipulation for other purposes could be seen as scientific ethical abuse and will be dealt with accordingly ([Rossner and Yamada 2004](#)).

Authors should comply with any specific policy for graphical images applied by the relevant journal, e.g., providing the original images as supplementary material with the article or depositing these in a suitable repository.

7.11. Clinical Trial Transparency

The [Unique Scientific Publishers](#) supports clinical trial transparency. For relevant journals, authors are expected to conform to industry best standards in clinical trial registration and presentation, for example, the [CONSORT](#) guidelines as further set out in the policies of the relevant journal ([ICMJE](#)).

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