

How can better animal health improve human health?

Keeping livestock healthy and well cared for improves animal, human, ecosystem and economic health.

Dealing with the many problems emerging from this fraught relationship—from a rising risk of pandemics, livestock diseases, destruction of natural lands and drug-resistant pathogens—requires forging a new One Health alliance between medical, veterinary and environmental experts.

Despite the many factors contributing to these problems, interventions often have a very narrow focus and are staffed experts working in isolation—physicians and epidemiologists address diseases in people; veterinarians deal with animal health issues; environmental experts focus on protecting natural habitats; and food safety officials struggle to manage the array of problems from farm to fork that cause food-borne illnesses.

Today, there is a growing recognition that globally, national, regionally and locally, we need to embrace a One Health approach to managing challenges that routinely have a human, environmental and animal health dimension.

Facts

A steady rise in outbreaks of infectious diseases, from high profile problems like COVID-19 and Ebola to smoldering outbreaks of disease like lassa fever to the increased threat of new pandemics from the accelerated spread of pathogens like avian influenza.

Some 75 percent of all new and emerging human infectious diseases are “zoonotic” --they jumped from animals to people. And even before COVID-19,

which was caused by a virus linked to bats, about a dozen zoonotic diseases were sickening 2.4 billion people every year and killing 2.2 million.

Increased consumption of milk, meat and eggs in Asia and Africa—which carry pathogens that require safe handling—is contributing to an increase in food-borne diseases, which cost poor countries US\$110 billion annually in lost productivity and medical expenses.

Irresponsible uses of antibiotics and other antimicrobials to address human and animal health problems are contributing to a surge of drug-resistant infections that could undermine the foundations of modern medicine.

Read more about One Health solutions and messages [here](#)