

New Zealand Veterinary Association | Position Statement | Ratified: November 2022

## One Health

### Position statement

The New Zealand Veterinary Association (NZVA) supports the concept of One Health, acknowledging that animal health, human health, and the health of the environment are inextricably linked.

### Explanation

The One Health concept summarises an idea that has been known for more than a century; that human health, animal health, and ecosystem health are all interdependent on each other.

In the early 2000s the One Health concept was envisaged and implemented by the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), in partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN (FAO). Their aim was to create a collaborative global approach to understanding and mitigating the combined risks to human health, animal health and ecosystem health. In recognition of this, the World Veterinary Association has developed a position statement of One Health.

From a veterinary context, the core of One Health is the health and welfare of animals. However, it extends to include biosecurity, and the improvement of human health by maintaining and improving standards of food safety and food security. The Veterinary Council of New Zealand's (VCNZ) Code of Professional Conduct acknowledges the veterinary role in One Health when it describes the roles and responsibilities of veterinarians. Veterinarians' ethical and professional obligations as detailed in VCNZ's Code of Professional Conduct, by implication extends to the understanding and acknowledgement of factors that impinge on the health and welfare of animals and alleviating animal suffering. Such factors include (but are not limited to): climate change, water availability and quality, antimicrobial resistance, environmental degradation, and extreme agricultural intensification.

Veterinarians' position in communities provides them a unique opportunity to become key One Health influencers. A classic example of One Health is the origins of the SARS-CoV-2 global pandemic. An animal disease became a spill-over zoonotic event due to an environment that put infected animals and susceptible humans in close contact.

### Guiding principles

Veterinarians, by virtue of their training and experience, have a particular responsibility to follow the principles set out below in all areas of veterinary science, from individual animal cases to veterinary public health:

1. The veterinary profession, and the individual veterinarian, have particular knowledge regarding animal health, animal welfare, zoonoses, biosecurity, food security and food safety. They should use that knowledge for the betterment of animal, human and environmental health, i.e. One Health.
2. Veterinarians should use their knowledge, skills and abilities when possible to guide their clients and their communities in addressing One Health issues. They can do this by leading-by-example

and by helping to develop habits, policies, and practices that acknowledge the principles of One Health.

3. Veterinarians -should explore working collaboratively with other disciplines to help facilitate better animal, human and environmental health, and welfare, and to continually promote the concept of One Health.
4. The veterinary profession should endeavour to provide current, broad-based, education in One Health concepts during primary veterinary education, including but not limited to: epidemiology, laboratory sciences, food safety, animal welfare, animal behaviour, zoonotic disease, anti-microbial stewardship, and basic ecology.
5. Multi-disciplinary educational opportunities in One Health should be widely available and promoted to veterinarians.
6. The wider veterinary profession in New Zealand should endeavour to play a more active role in One Health-related programmes and policies in New Zealand, standing in solidarity with our human medical counterparts and the broader ecological health communities.

## Further Reading

1. WOAHA "One Health" policy; including the WOAHA Public-Private partnership framework - [https://www.oie.int/publicprivatepartnerships/ppp/en/Handbook\\_en.html](https://www.oie.int/publicprivatepartnerships/ppp/en/Handbook_en.html)
2. WVA position statements on One Health issues <https://www.worldvet.org/library.php?item=1016&cat=1&view=item>
3. One Health: A new professional imperative. One Health Initiative Task Force, Final Report, American Veterinary Medical Association, July 15, 2008 <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/reports/one-health-ohitf-final-report-2008>
4. One Health: An extraordinary calling for veterinary medicine. Lonnie J. King, World Small Animal Veterinary Association World Congress Proceedings, 2013 <https://www.vin.com/apputil/content/defaultadv1.aspx?pld=11372&catId=35288&id=5709708>
5. UN Environment Program – Preventing the Next Pandemic: Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission. 2020 <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/preventing-future-zoonotic-disease-outbreaks-protecting-environment-animals-and>
6. IPBES Workshop on Biodiversity & Pandemics Report, October 2020 <https://ipbes.net/pandemics>
7. The Coming Plague: Newly Emerging Diseases in a World Out of Balance. Laurie Garrett, 1994. <https://www.lauriegarrett.com/the-coming-plague>
8. Australian Veterinary Association policy – Climate change and animal health, welfare and production <https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/environment-and-conservation/climate-change-and-animal-health-welfare-and-production/>
9. New Zealand Climate Change Commission proposals <https://www.climatecommission.govt.nz/get-involved/our-advice-and-evidence/>
10. Veterinary Council of New Zealand Code of Professional Conduct [https://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/Web/Code\\_of\\_Professional\\_Conduct/Web/Code\\_of\\_Professional\\_Conduct/Code\\_Of\\_Conduct.aspx?hkey=56088e9c-118e-451d-8a2a-68f08194836b](https://www.vetcouncil.org.nz/Web/Code_of_Professional_Conduct/Web/Code_of_Professional_Conduct/Code_Of_Conduct.aspx?hkey=56088e9c-118e-451d-8a2a-68f08194836b)

## Additional resources

1. One Health Commission ([www.onehealthcommission.org](http://www.onehealthcommission.org))
2. World One Health Congress ([www.worldonehealthcongress.org](http://www.worldonehealthcongress.org))
3. One Health Aotearoa ([www.onehealth.org.nz](http://www.onehealth.org.nz))
4. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation ([www.gatesfoundation.org](http://www.gatesfoundation.org))
5. EcoHealth Alliance (<https://www.ecohealthalliance.org>)