

## **POSITION STATEMENT ON CLIMATE CHANGE, WILDLIFE DISEASES AND WILDLIFE HEALTH**

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS

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The world's climate is changing at an accelerated pace due to human activities, resulting in unprecedented impacts on wildlife, ecosystem, domestic animal, and human health. Impacts most relevant to wildlife health are extreme weather, altered disease transmission dynamics, and disturbances to habitat and ecological systems essential to wildlife conservation and planetary health. The members of the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians (AAWV) are experts in wildlife health and conservation with experience in research, recognition, and response to climate variability and the consequences of the climate crisis. AAWV encourages action and offers leadership to reduce climate change impacts to wildlife, the health of the planet, and all of its inhabitants.

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians recognizes that climate change is a fundamental and global threat to wildlife health and conservation:

- Climate change exacerbates habitat loss and resource degradation.
- Climate change impacts each component of the wildlife disease triad – host, agent, and the environment; and will render many systems more susceptible to disease impacts.
- Climate change will place unprecedented demands on government agencies and other entities responsible for managing and conserving wildlife in their jurisdictions.

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians supports actions aimed at combating climate change:

- **Public outreach** - Wildlife professionals are uniquely positioned to provide information for the public on tangible topics at the intersection of climate change, wildlife health, and conservation. The information has the power to garner support for policy changes at the highest levels.
- **Personal action** - As wildlife professionals, AAWV urges its members to model actions that decrease carbon emissions, such as reducing travel, transitioning to renewable energy use, and finding new ways to network with our colleagues, while encouraging the conservation community and all global citizens to do the same.
- **Collaboration** - Multidisciplinary approaches across regulatory and geographic boundaries are essential to the identification and implementation of actionable solutions. AAWV will advocate for broad application of the One Health approach to mitigate the drivers and impacts of climate change.
- **Scenario planning** - AAWV will engage with climate change scientists to estimate effects of global climate change on species, communities, and ecosystems to determine where restoration, conservation, and preservation efforts

will have the most success for native wildlife species and ensure that conservation capital is spent wisely.

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians offers leadership and expertise towards dealing with solutions to climate change:

- Wildlife veterinarians, as health and conservation experts, are poised to serve as leaders in wildlife conservation and planetary health. Members of the AAWV are committed to act to combat the climate crisis and will work to provide scientifically-informed information and leadership to aid the public and wildlife management agencies in making collective changes to reduce the impacts of climate change now. The AAWV membership has subject matter expertise to provide assistance wherever it is needed for policy discussions at the state, federal, tribal or NGO level.

## **REFERENCES**

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