

POSITION STATEMENT ON ONE HEALTH

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF WILDLIFE VETERINARIANS

DATE WRITTEN: 2017

DATE REVISED: 01/06/2021

The health of humans is intricately linked to the health of the natural world, including wildlife. Healthy ecosystems provide life-sustaining, humanity-supporting, and culturally valued services. Intact ecosystems help regulate disease. Conversely, disruption and degradation of biodiversity, natural environments, and ecosystem processes drives disease emergence and spillover into new species. The practice of One Health recognizes these linkages and aims to improve the health of all species and their shared ecosystems by working across sectoral and geographic boundaries to promote, protect, and improve the health of ecosystems, animals, and people.

The interdisciplinary approach of One Health is critically important in addressing the greatest public health and conservation threats of this century: the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. Many of the approaches for addressing these threats, such as increasing areas dedicated to conservation, are One Health solutions that conserve resources, reduce disease spillover risk, and promote public health.

The American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians advocates for:

- **A focus on health, rather than disease.** This optimizes successes and minimizes negative impacts, whether those negative impacts are the direct result of disease or the indirect result of public perceptions of wildlife as disease reservoirs.
- **Active communication and advocacy for science-based policy decisions.** Wildlife veterinarians and other wildlife health specialists are uniquely positioned and trusted to provide science-based information, advocate for conservation accordingly and practice an inclusive One Health approach.
- **Building a diverse, equitable, and sustainable domestic and international wildlife health workforce.** This ensures respect for and integration of indigenous knowledge, incorporates a wide range of global viewpoints, and allows the One Health approach to reach the greatest audience.

In order to accomplish these goals, the American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians will work towards the following goals: ¹

- Enhance the capacity of federal, state, local and international wildlife agencies, tribal nations, and non-governmental organizations to plan for, prevent,

¹ Note: These actions are based broadly or specifically on the "[Manhattan Principles](#)" which were derived from a symposium entitled "One World, One Health" on September 29, 2004.

and respond to wildlife disease, when indicated, using adaptive, holistic approaches that take the complex interaction between all species and the environment into full account;

- Advocate for disease surveillance, prevention, and mitigation efforts that recognize wildlife as a casualty of disease as well as a potential reservoir;
- Develop interdisciplinary diagnostic methods, vaccines, treatments, management actions, and policy guidance for the prevention and control of diseases across species;
- Engage the public about the importance of biodiversity and natural resource conservation, as well as the role of wildlife veterinarians and other wildlife professionals in One Health;
- Support effective, sustainable management of wildlife trade and movement to protect native wildlife populations, while simultaneously decreasing the risk for pathogen movement, cross-species disease transmission, and development of novel host-pathogen relationships; and
- Support disease management strategies that restrict the mass culling of free-ranging wildlife to situations where there is multidisciplinary scientific consensus that a wildlife population poses an urgent, significant threat to human health, long-term food security, or wildlife health more broadly.