

How the animal health industry takes action on One Health

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One Health, is more than just a buzzword, argues AnimalHealthEurope's Roxane Feller



Roxane Feller | *Photo credit: AnimalHealthEurope*

The One Health approach prioritises quality of life for people and animals and recognises that healthier animals means healthier people and leads to a healthier planet.

But what does this mean in practice and what steps are being taken by the animal medicines industry in order to contribute to the One Health vision?

As people we depend on animals for companionship, assistance and leisure as well as for food and other products such as wool and leather.

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Just like us humans, animals get sick and we have a responsibility to care for them and provide them with the correct care and treatment they need in order to get better. Our entire food chain could simply not function without animal medicines to prevent and treat disease.

Without these medicines it would be impossible to raise livestock or to keep domestic pets while maintaining public health. Farmers, vets, the food industry and pet owners rely on the animal health industry to keep animals healthy and protect their welfare.

Thanks to the health protection that we provide, farmers are able to raise livestock efficiently and effectively and to produce quality, animal products such as milk, meat and eggs that form the essential ingredients in of a nutritious diet.

The reciprocal relationship between animal health and people's lives can be even better understood when one considers that of the 1451 diseases recognised in humans, some 60 per cent are due to pathogens that can pass from one species to another.

These diseases are known as zoonoses and preventing and controlling them is essential in protecting consumers and animals and is a core priority for the animal health industry.

In sum, medicines which keep animals healthy also keep people healthy and ensure sustainability throughout the food chain from farms and the rural economy right through to the food products we buy and consume every day.

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The sheer variety of species and range of diseases and treatments means that innovation in animal medicines and vaccines is crucial. Not only is it vital for the sustainability of European agriculture, but for the sustainability of our whole society.

Finding a balance between the interests of animals and people is essential. Certainly we have a responsibility to use veterinary medicines correctly and indeed 24 per cent of animal medicines sold in Europe are vaccines used to protect animals from disease and suffering. We believe that prevention is better than cure in ensuring the health of both humans and animals.

AnimalhealthEurope believes a formal platform bringing together relevant stakeholders at EU level, should be created to work on One health issues and offer up solutions to EU and national concerns. This platform could meet regularly with the EU “One Health Network” to discuss actionable solutions for challenges the human health, animal health and environmental health sectors are facing.

Keeping ahead of the curve and being prepared to respond to new diseases and strains that emerge is an ongoing challenge for society and the animal health industry.

Our increasingly global economy and food chain means that we are facing new threats such as African Swine fever, Lumpy Skin Disease and Avian flu variants on a regular basis and these need to be managed effectively in order to maintain optimal health for all species.

So how do we safeguard and promote this virtuous circle? Well we need to start with a positive and encouraging legislative environment and a regulatory process that, at the end of the road, safeguards consumers.

To achieve that end goal, the new rules should ensure that companies can innovate and improve treatments to increase availability of animal medicines which protect both animal and human health. It is also essential in driving business performance and contributing to a vital industry.

AnimalhealthEurope and its members are working alongside the EU institutions to ensure that the industry can operate in an environment which is well managed and regulated and which gives companies the confidence to invest in the development and marketing of new products and technologies.

In Europe we have a well-established system where veterinary medicines only reach the marketplace after thorough testing to assure efficacy, safety and quality, and review by relevant government authorities.

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This process is currently under review and the revision of the regulations on Veterinary Medicinal Products and Medicated Feed promise to be very supportive of the “One Europe” approach. The updated legislation must streamline procedures and so relieve some of the administrative burden and speed up the whole process of bringing innovations to market.

The intention must be to foster innovation and prompt a wider choice of treatment options supporting the animal health industry to innovate more and supporting a wider availability and scope of treatments.

This has got to be good news for all of Europe’s citizens whether they have skin, feathers or fur and whether they walk on two legs or four.

About the author

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