

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES FOR LINKING ANIMAL AND HUMAN HEALTH

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Emerging and re emerging zoonotic and animal diseases as well as the effects of so called ‘neglected’ diseases have resulted in serious public health, animal health including wildlife, and socio economic problems. Factors predisposing to an increasing risk of disease include global movements of people, wildlife and trade; an increasing population growth, demand for meat and rapid urbanization; intensification of livestock production; environmental damage and change; and climate warming and variability. The effectiveness of predicting, responding to, and managing diseases has been hampered by the general structural separation of veterinary and human medical science disciplines in the 20th Century and a lack of attention to the role of wildlife in disease evolution and spread. International policy support for a ‘One Health’ approach, a concept that has existed for several thousand years and involves an integrated approach to human, animal and ecosystems health, should improve prediction, prevention, recognition and response systems to disease if implemented in a sensible and coherent manner. Factors mitigating against the adoption of ‘One Health’ approaches include but are not confined to funding pressures, other national or sub national priorities, a lack of understanding of ‘One Health’ and its potential benefits, and conservatism. Policy opportunities exist to support ‘One Health’ by demonstrating cost benefits and efficiencies that can derive from such an approach, and to support human amenity in areas such as public health and biodiversity. The notion that combining animal and human health services is necessary to support ‘One Health’ has proven to be false as the key success factors are functional coordination and cooperation across a wide range of interested parties. Linking animal and human health through such collaboration supports key policy imperatives including the Millennium Development Goals and food security. Case examples are discussed to demonstrate the policy value of ‘One Health’ approaches.

