WVA Declaration of Incheon on Veterinary Roles in One Health and EcoHealth Networks

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PREAMBLE

1. One Health is the integrative effort of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, regionally, and globally to attain optimal health for people, animals, and the environment, which are recognized to be interconnected in ecosystems.

2. A broad intersecting and interdisciplinary holistic approach is essential to develop effective solutions to One Health issues.

3. Optimal health of people and animals cannot be secured without understanding the context of nested ecosystems that are connected with growing intensity by social, economic, biological, and physical links.

4. The veterinary medical profession plays a critical role in activities that address health risks at the animal-human-environment interfaces in ecosystems that range in scale from local to global levels. These activities include:
   - reducing global hunger;
   - ensuring food quality and safety (especially of animal source foods);
   - early detection and control of zoonotic outbreaks;
   - diligent disease surveillance;
   - protection from biosecurity risks; and
   - the significant and varied impacts of the human-animal bond on human lives.

5. Activities related to domestic animals include:
   - promoting animal welfare;
   - preventing and controlling disease outbreaks;
   - improving the efficiency of domestic animal production for food;
   - supporting proper animal product trade;
   - enhanced disease surveillance, diagnosis and control;
   - providing clinical and population health expertise for all animals;
   - responsible use of antimicrobials for the benefit of animal welfare; and
   - preventing and combatting antimicrobial resistance.
6. The activities for ecological health include:
   - conservation of wildlife resources and biodiversity;
   - controlled movement of exotic species and diseases;
   - pathogen/disease surveillance and prevention in wild animal populations;
   - conservation of natural resources and conservation medicine; and
   - climate change adapting activities.

7. In accordance with World Veterinary Association’s policy statement on One Health, this Declaration is intended to set guidelines for veterinarians working as knowledgeable consultants and guardians of EcoHealth on which the health and well-being of animals and humans are dependent.

VETERINARY ROLES

8. The success of the One Health concept depends on impacting public policies. Therefore, the veterinary profession makes a concerted effort to put more emphasis on acquiring expertise directly related to policy. For example, veterinarians need to be included in the healthcare networks for social sciences, psychologists, and public health for our expertise in how animals (for companionship, food, economic dependence, and labor) impact the emotional aspects of people represented in these sectors of society.

9. Personal and professional leadership are imperative qualities for veterinary professionals. Veterinarians are aware of and understand the biophysical and socio-economic links between human, animal, and ecosystem health. Scientific knowledge and clinical skills alone are not sufficient to produce successful veterinarians. Deeper understanding of professional ethics, communication, leadership, and professional wellness are priorities and will strengthen the social trust in veterinary services and sustainability of the veterinary roles in the society.

10. The public stereotype of the limited roles of veterinarians as only clinicians for sick animals and regulatory services must change. To attract those applicants to the veterinary profession who will contribute to One Health teams, veterinary education establishments must attract a broader applicant pool and value applicants’ more diverse interests, such as experience in EcoHealth, as well as clinical fields as a part of admission requirements to the professional veterinary curriculums. ‘One Health’ and ‘EcoHealth’ concepts should be included in veterinary professional curriculums. Education programs for veterinary graduates in these concepts at local, national, regional and global levels should be included in required continuing professional development.
11. The veterinary profession should assertively advocate for and better protect the welfare of all animals living in all environments. Veterinarians are educated in animal health and animal welfare evaluations. Animal health is part of the animal's welfare condition. These evaluations include proper housing, management, nutrition, disease prevention and treatment, responsible care, humane handling, and, when necessary, humane euthanasia.

12. Veterinarians are valued partners for their comprehensive medical education and expertise within health care professional networks and respected leaders in the One Health teams. The One Health concept has been at the root of veterinary medicine for centuries and has its origins in the management of the disease threats to humans and animals through zoonotic disease vectors, food-borne disease, and socio-economic development. In the 21st century, global food security and access to safe water are major concerns. Veterinarians are major partners in humane animal source food production for human health and nutrition.

13. Trust in the veterinary services for the greater public good is based on the ethical behavior of the profession. Veterinarians must be responsible and held accountable for sustaining the highest ethical standards of veterinary profession with strong regulatory bodies in the appropriate jurisdictions.

14. One Health and EcoHealth have different origins, yet both aim to mitigate the risks threatening ecosystems and public health, including veterinary public health. The more marginalized sectors of social sciences, wildlife management, ecology and environmental science need more emphasis and veterinarians must take the lead to incorporate these areas into the One Health approach.

15. The World Veterinary Association acts as the voice of the global veterinary medical profession with international partners in a One Health approach for establishing guidelines and policy for the benefit of animal welfare, public health, and EcoHealth.