

# Preface

## One Health

The One Health concept is founded on an awareness of the major opportunities that exist to protect public health through policies aimed at preventing and controlling pathogens at the level of animal populations, that is, at the interface between humans, animals and the environment. Veterinarians and animal owners have a key role to play in the implementation of these policies, as do people who regularly come into contact with wildlife and the environment, in particular those involved in fishing and hunting and managing protected areas. These policies include new mechanisms requiring stakeholders to inform one another of their activities and act in a concerted manner. They encourage animal health and environment managers to liaise with public health managers, who, whether they be state officials, local government staff or physicians in private practice, usually work under the auspices of the Ministry of Health.

Over the last ten years, the term 'One Health' has gained wide acceptance for describing this coordinated approach. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) adopted a leadership role early on and has been instrumental in putting the One Health vision into practice. This has been facilitated by a formal alliance on this topic with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The three Organisations have published a joint Concept Note clarifying their reciprocal responsibilities and their objectives in this field. They have also decided to choose the following as priority topics for their joint actions: rabies, which still kills nearly 70,000 people every year, zoonotic influenza viruses (those causing certain types of avian influenza, for instance) and antimicrobial resistance. For its part, the OIE is continuing to develop health standards relating to the safety of international trade in animals and animal products, as well as standards on animal disease prevention and control methods, with priority being given to the prevention of diseases transmissible to humans.

The most effective and economical means of protecting humans from disease is to combat zoonotic pathogens by controlling them at the animal source. This requires new political approaches that lead to investment in good governance, particularly with regard to the allocation of public and private resources.

We should not overlook pathogens that, although not zoonotic, have a negative impact on the production of animal-derived protein or the environment on which human and animal health depend. This is especially important in developing countries, because problems affecting the quantity and quality of food production and its availability, as well as the environment, can also have serious public health consequences.

The OIE publishes international standards on the good governance of both the public- and private-sector components of Veterinary Services, including the initial training and continuing education of the various actors involved. Furthermore, if an OIE Member Country so wishes, the OIE can carry out an independent assessment of their Veterinary Services' compliance with OIE quality standards using the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Evaluation Tool. It can also carry out further assessments that enable Member Countries to calculate the investments and legislative and technical reforms needed to bring their Veterinary Services into line with these quality standards.

These assessments, which are known collectively as the OIE 'PVS Pathway', have already benefited nearly 120 Member Countries. As part of the Pathway, the OIE is piloting an assessment tool that evaluates the One Health component of Veterinary Services; this tool has already been successfully tested in three countries. It is designed to help countries to establish closer collaboration between Veterinary Services and Public Health Services, in compliance both with the quality standards of the OIE and with the International Health Regulations (IHR) of the WHO. The recent decision of the WHO to develop a tool similar to the PVS Evaluation Tool to assist its Member Countries to assess their compliance with the IHR (and estimate the costs of improving it) is another example of the benefits of the collaborative One Health approach. The OIE and WHO have also produced a joint guide for Member Countries on the parallel activities that Public Health Services and Animal Health Services can undertake.

These synergies between animal health, public health and environmental health, applied at a local, national and global level, will undoubtedly contribute to the continuous and simultaneous improvement of public health and animal health worldwide. In this issue of the OIE *Scientific and Technical Review*, we have asked experts from a wide variety of disciplines to provide their perspectives on One Health. I am pleased to share both the diversity of thinking on this topic and the various ways in which the One Health concept is being implemented. It is interesting to note that there is a high degree of concurrence from authors from different countries and with very different backgrounds.

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to all of the authors who have contributed to this valuable edition of the *Review*. I would also like to express my thanks to members of the OIE Working Group on Wildlife, and other experts, for their contributions, reviews and comments. And finally, I would like to thank the editor of this issue, Dr William Karesh of the EcoHealth Alliance. Dr Karesh, who is President of the Working Group on Wildlife, generously gave of his time and expertise in helping to edit the chapters of this review, and I am very grateful for his invaluable contribution.

Bernard Vallat  
Director General

