

Health for animals improves health for all *An Open Letter on Strengthening Pandemic Preparedness*

For all the gains in improving global health over recent decades, even the most advanced health systems were no match for COVID-19, reminding the world of the dangers of complacency when it comes to public health. COVID, alongside endemic zoonoses like rabies and food-borne illnesses like salmonella are not bound by borders, neither geographical nor biological. A disease threat anywhere is a threat to everyone everywhere.

Preventing the next pandemic requires a renewed commitment to the inextricable principles of One Health that unite us all.

As nations look to bolster public health security and reduce the risk of future global health crises with a new [pandemic prevention agreement](#), we urge global leaders to fully embrace a One Health approach that recognizes animals as an essential line of defence in protecting people. Stopping zoonotic diseases at their source is the most effective way to avoid the devastating human and economic toll of future pandemics.

This is particularly important for emerging markets, where livestock play a proportionately greater role in societies and economies. Yet, access to veterinary services, products and professionals across the Global South remains limited and less [than one third](#) of sub-Saharan African countries report having veterinarians in all districts. This poses a persistent threat to zoonotic disease control and a safe, sustainable food supply. By bolstering animal health, we can not only avert an emerging disease outbreak, but create lasting economic and societal impact.

At every stage of pandemic preparedness and prevention, there are [concrete actions](#) that can leverage animal health for improved public health outcomes, including:

1) Surveillance

Tracking new and emerging infectious diseases in animals requires significant resources, given that some [75 per cent](#) of these illnesses originate in animals, primarily in wildlife. Detecting such diseases early and often provides a crucial window of opportunity to treat or isolate the infection in animals -- before an outbreak spreads to other animals and people.

2) Data Sharing

Ensuring information about animal disease outbreaks is shared promptly with public health, food safety and environmental agencies also accelerates the appropriate response to minimize the risk to people. Creating an international and integrated platform to exchange key alerts and updates across the public and private sectors can equip all stakeholders to respond more effectively.

3) Access to Medicines

Developing policies and funding mechanisms that increase the availability and affordability of veterinary medicines, services and technologies, particularly in developing countries, would significantly reinforce global health security, given the prevalence of zoonoses in the Global South. However, regulatory barriers and lack of infrastructure such as reliable cold chain to preserve the safety and efficacy of vaccines present significant hurdles for reaching animals in need.

4) Investment in Prevention

Disease prevention is the cornerstone of healthy animals. Investing in veterinary services in nations where zoonoses pose the greatest threat can halt outbreaks before they begin. This includes strengthening infrastructure, animal biosecurity, vaccination, access to diagnostic, digital

and traditional veterinary tools, awareness campaigns and vaccine banks. Our sector is contributing to this through not only our companies, but in partnerships like HealthforAnimals [veterinary training project](#) in sub-Saharan Africa that will support sustainable infrastructure for animal health that improves lives and livelihoods.

5) Animal Health Voices

Too often in the development of health policy tools, veterinary and environmental experts are consulted late or not at all. This is a missed opportunity to leverage their intimate knowledge of how illness can spread between species, where reservoirs may lie and opportunities for control. Without recognizing all three domains of 'One Health', public health policy is working against the public.

Adopting these measures would not only strengthen pandemic prevention strategies, but also further social, economic and health benefits by reducing livestock losses -- thereby improving the safety and sustainability of our global food systems. It means more meat, milk and eggs reaching food supply chains, higher incomes for some 1.3 billion people, and greater access to affordable and nutritious food for billions more. Moreover, it reduces the rate of diet-related illness, a risk factor for infections such as COVID-19.

From the wildlife that surrounds us in the natural world, to the pets that bring us comfort, to the livestock producing our meat, milk and eggs, our dependence on animals cannot be overstated. Health policy and governance in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic must be reformulated around a new acknowledgement that **health for animals improves health for all.**



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About Us

HealthforAnimals is the voice of the animal health industry and an advocate for the fundamental role of healthy animals in improving global wellbeing, sustainability and prosperity. HealthforAnimals represents developers and manufacturers of animal health products, including vaccines, diagnostics, parasiticides, antibiotics, digital technologies, and other tools that the health and well-being of animals. We believe health for animals improves health for all. For more information, visit [HealthforAnimals.org](https://www.healthforanimals.org)