

Food for Thought: Healthy animals improve health for all *An Open Letter on World Zoonoses Day*

For decades, World Zoonoses Day has raised awareness of zoonotic diseases -- illnesses that can be transmitted between animals and humans. The date, July 6th, honors the moment in 1885 when the first ever vaccine against a zoonotic disease was administered. It is truly a 'One Health' day that spotlights of the intricate connection between people and animals, reminding us that what affects animals ultimately shapes the world around us.

We see this in stark relief when we consider the annual effects of zoonotic disease: each year, just 13 of the [200 known](#) zoonotic diseases are [responsible for](#) 2.2 million human deaths and 2.4 billion cases of illness. Preventing these illnesses in animals *before* they spill over into people is a proven method for protecting public health.

For instance, prior to mass vaccination, the U.S. [experienced thousands](#) of cases of rabies in people each year – a fatal illness spread by a bite from a rabid animal. Today, the disease is nearly eliminated.

The One Health value of animal vaccination and better health also go beyond just zoonoses. We know that livestock have a measurable effect across numerous other One Health indicators like global hunger, climate emissions, land use, and more.

A newly published [report](#) offers eye-opening look at these livestock disease effects, finding that:

- **Hunger:** In 2019, poultry disease resulted in a 5% rise in hunger, equivalent to an additional 34 million people across the world going hungry.
- **Food Security:** Global annual beef production losses due to disease equals the consumption needs of 1.6 billion people.
- **Emissions:** A 10 percentage point reduction in global livestock disease is associated with an 800 million ton decrease in GHGs, equivalent to the yearly emissions of 117 million Europeans.

Furthermore, when herds and flocks are hit with disease, more land is ultimately required for production. The report found that when 20% of poultry globally are affected by disease, 8.6% more land is estimated to be needed to maintain production levels. This can heighten the risk of zoonotic disease spillover if production moves into lands near wildlife that harbor emerging illnesses.

An Ounce of Prevention

As we look ahead to a world with 9.8 billion people – up from [8 billion today](#) – it is essential to consider how to tackle zoonotic disease and other livestock ailments. Doing so can unlock One Health benefits of animal health including an improved food supply, healthier environment and stronger livelihoods for farmers.

Consider [that](#):

- **Food:** A 60% global vaccination rate for beef cattle correlates to a 50%+ rise in productivity, while two cattle vaccinated globally is associated with one person avoiding hunger.
- **Farmer:** Every 1% reduction in beef cattle disease rates would increase producer revenue by \$3.2 billion and for dairy cattle, by \$3.8 billion.

- **Environment:** A 40% global vaccination rate for cattle in a given year is associated with a 5.2% reduction in land required for livestock production

The evidence speaks volumes: **Healthy animals can support a healthier, more sustainable future.**

As our world continues to change, it is imperative that the veterinary profession, private sector, governmental leaders, environmental groups and communities work together to keep animals healthy. World Zoonoses Day is an ideal opportunity to remind the world about our collective responsibility to keep animals healthy and ultimately better protect our own well-being.

Addressing animal health challenges represents a significant opportunity to continue to reduce the environmental impact of livestock production, while markedly improving food security, farmer livelihoods, and stabilizing rural communities.

Change begins with education and awareness. When we pair that with innovative vaccines and other preventative practices, we can have the greatest impact on society, economies, and the environment. Health for animals improves health for all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Sarvaas'.

Carel du Marchie Sarvaas
Executive Director
HealthforAnimals



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristin Peck'.

Kristin Peck
President
HealthforAnimals

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)