# ANIMAL WELFARE & **REDUCING THE BURDEN OF COMMUNICABLE DISEASE**

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Pathogens with pandemic potential often emerge where humans interact with domestic or wild animals, especially in degraded habitats or where animals are kept in intensive and poor conditions. The commercial wildlife trade poses health risks at every stage: capture, farming and holding, transportation, and sale. Intensive farming also creates ideal conditions for disease spread, as seen with avian influenza, which is linked to the confinement, mixing, and movement of birds in substandard welfare conditions.

**60%**
of all known infectious diseases & up to 75% of emerging ones are zoonotic

**~1.7 mn**
viruses remain 'undiscovered' in animals & up to almost 50% of these could potentially infect people

**<1%**
of the cost of cost of COVID-19 in 2020, is the cost of pandemic prevention

## IMPROVING ANIMAL WELFARE IS A PUBLIC HEALTH IMPERATIVE

**To reduce disease emergence and spillover risk:** Address the root causes of disease emergence and spillover at the human-animal-environment interface via the One Health approach.

**To reduce wild animal-human disease risk:** Strengthen commercial wildlife trade & use regulations, end commercial wild meat and live animal markets, enforce bans on high-risk wildlife markets, and invest in alternative livelihoods for communities that depend on these practices.

**To reduce infectious disease risk in farmed animals and aquaculture:** Improve animal welfare at all stages of production; invest in animal health systems, including access to medicines and vaccines; and phase out non-essential antimicrobials, i.e. for growth promotion and routine prophylactic use in healthy animals.

**To transform social and economic systems:** Embed the value of animals—their health, welfare, and role in ecosystem integrity—into policies and practices across all sectors.

# INTERNATIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE

The **Biodiversity and Health Global Plan of Action** emphasises biodiversity and health co-benefits through holistic approaches (e.g., One Health). These include improving regulation, management & trade in wild animals and promoting improved standards of animal welfare for their health and well being, and reducing the risk of communicable disease in farm animals and aquaculture.

The **UN General Assembly High Level meeting on AMR Political Declaration** recognises the need to reduce the overall use of antimicrobials in the animal sector, and promote good animal husbandry to reduce the need for antimicrobials.

The **Pandemic Agreement adopted in May 2025 by World Health Organization Member States** recognises animals in Article 4 on pandemic prevention, and Article 5 on One Health. **Article 4** states that Parties shall take measures to "address drivers of infectious disease at the human-animal-environment interface, with the aim of early prevention of pandemics" and "identify and reduce pandemic risks associated with human-animal interactions." **Article 5** states that Parties shall promote a One Health approach for pandemic prevention, "recognising the health of people is interconnected with animal health and the environment."

## IMPACT OF CLIMATE ON ZOONOTIC RISK

Climate change heightens zoonotic disease risk by disrupting ecosystems, shifting vector transmission patterns, and increasing human–animal contact. Integrating climate adaptation into public and animal health strategies is key to reduce these threats.

- Protect and restore ecosystems by enforcing land-use rules, expanding protected areas, integrating health into development plans, and supporting community conservation linking health, environment, and livelihoods.
- Cut emissions by adopting low-impact, high-welfare farming, ending harmful subsidies, investing in sustainable proteins, and promoting regenerative agriculture.
- Invest in early warning systems, climate-resilient animal health services, stronger disease surveillance, veterinary public health, One Health collaboration, and include animal health in climate adaptation funding.

## ONE HEALTH: AS DEFINED IN THE WHO PANDEMIC AGREEMENT

"One Health approach" for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response recognises that **human health is closely linked and interdependent with the health of domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment, including ecosystems.** It uses an integrated, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach that contributes to equitable and sustainable development.

## SCAN FOR SOURCES & REFERENCES

All WFA policy recommendations are evidence-based — ensuring better outcomes for people, animals, and the planet.