

## ANIMAL WELFARE & NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

3 GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



### THE GLOBAL HEALTH BURDEN OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)

**#1**

cause of death globally  
is **heart disease**, which is  
heavily linked to diet

**73%**

of premature NCD  
deaths occur in low-  
and middle-income  
countries

**75%**

of non-pandemic deaths  
are due to NCDs

#### ANIMAL WELFARE: A SOLUTION TO ADDRESS NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES.

Consuming meat, dairy and other animal products increases the risk for heart disease and certain cancers - two of the biggest threats to **global public health and economic loss**. Industrial animal farming worsens the problem by polluting air, water, and soil, which can harm nearby communities by increasing heart disease, breathing problems, nerve disorders, and some cancers. It also drives **climate change** by destroying forests, oceans, and other carbon sinks. Climate change, in turn, contributes to diseases like heart and lung conditions, and excess heat leads to poor pregnancy outcomes such as low birth weight, premature birth, and infant deaths.

A key strategy to prevent (and treat) NCDs is for public health strategies to promote a greater share of **plant-based foods** in diets. Public health efforts should include educating people, working with healthcare providers, creating subsidies for healthy plant-based foods, reducing subsidies for harmful animal products & ensuring industrial animal agriculture isn't excluded from environmental penalties.

## INTERNATIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE

---

The **World Health Organization** recommends a healthy diet to protect against malnutrition in all its forms, as well as NCDs including heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and cancer. The WHO emphasises the importance of public policies that promote the availability and accessibility of fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, whole grains, and plant-based oils with unsaturated fats, along with reductions in free sugars and saturated and trans fats found in meats and dairy products.

In December 2023, during COP28, the Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, observed that food production is responsible for almost one-third of the global burden of disease and a substantial portion of greenhouse gas emissions. He noted that transforming food systems is essential, by shifting towards healthier, diversified, and more plant-based diets.

### ANIMAL WELFARE & MENTAL HEALTH

Climate change contributes to poor mental health in adults as well as children. Risks include **post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and adjustment disorder**. Besides this, there are also stressors associated with forced migration and physical illnesses.

**Interacting with animals** has been proven to reduce stress, increase social activity and emotion regulation and improve mood. **Animal Assisted Therapy programs** improve mental health while **Equine Therapeutic Riding programs** build physical, cognitive, social-emotional and motor skills.

American Heart Association researchers found that spending just 12 minutes with a dog helped **lower blood pressure**, reduce the release of harmful stress hormones and **decrease anxiety** among patients hospitalised with heart failure.



### 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.