

ADVISORY NOTE

Addressing the essential role of animal health in pandemic prevention

Recommendations to members of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) for a new pandemic accord

As the INB met on 24 February, resuming on 14-15 March, to agree on ways of working and timelines for negotiating a pandemic accord, the [Action for Animal Health](#) coalition wishes to advise the INB members and co-chairs on the integral need to address weak animal health systems as part of pandemic prevention in the substantive content of an accord.

We are encouraged that the Special session of the World Health Assembly agreed that a new accord will focus on early detection and prevention of pandemics, as well as the “One Health” approach. However, we are deeply concerned that this ambition will fail if the new accord does not include actions to invest in animal health systems around the world.

The need for prevention

It is imperative that a new pandemic accord focuses on **preventing** the emergence of pathogens with pandemic potential. We cannot rely on reactive measures taken after animal-to-human transmission has already happened.

The root cause of pandemics lies in how pathogens move from animals to people ([Bernstein et al 2022](#)). This means that the substantive content of the accord must include provisions to stop spillover of zoonotic disease from animals to people in the first place.

To be effective, principles to prevent pandemics should align with OHHLEP’s definition of One Health. This definition recognises that One Health is not a one-way process towards protecting human health only, but takes a holistic approach to optimise the health of humans, **as well as** animals and ecosystems.

Unsustainable human activity and the exploitation of nature means diseases are emerging more frequently from animals, and jumping into human populations. Domesticated animals, such as livestock, can be sources of disease and can amplify diseases emerging from the wild ([ILRI and UNEP, 2021](#)). Poor livestock care and unsustainable farming practises are a major contributor to growing global antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Recommendations

We urge that the INB includes action to strengthen animal health systems and optimise animal health, especially in lower and middle income countries, as a way to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases from animals to people. Specifically:

- **Improve surveillance systems and capacity to secure early detection of animal disease in wildlife and domestic animal populations**, and ensure the ability to respond effectively, from the community level to the global level. This includes improving surveillance and preventative measures at critical points like farms, border crossings and wet markets, as well as better data sharing between countries.

- **Increase participation of community animal health workers and community members**, especially rural and marginalised communities (like pastoralists who regularly interact with animals), as sentinels of surveillance for monitoring animal health in their local areas.
- **Increase and upskill the animal health workforce**, who are vital in preventing zoonotic diseases. Skilled frontline workers play a vital role in building the resilience of communities and health systems to respond to threats, including the detection, prevention and treatment of zoonotic diseases in wildlife and domestic animals.
- **Provide access to good quality veterinary medicines and vaccines**, and ensure animal health professionals have the skills to use them properly, to prevent zoonotic diseases and to reduce the risk of antimicrobial resistance.
- **Improve animal care practises to improve immunity and minimise the routine use of antibiotics**. Antimicrobial resistance can increase the risk of disease emergence.
- **Improve animal care practises towards more efficient livestock production**, to reduce land use and encroachment on wildlife habitats, and to stop the transmission of emerging diseases (both zoonotic and communicable) from wildlife to domestic animals.

In addition to preventing pandemics from zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance, implementing these recommendations will have knock-on benefits for food security, nutrition, climate resilience and income security of some of the poorest people on our planet and communities that depend on livestock, contributing to Agenda 2030. With these targeted interventions, multiple Sustainable Development Goals can be addressed.

Recommendations for the INB process

We urge that experts and civil society organisations that are working towards securing human health, animal health and/or ecosystem health, are included in the negotiations and in the work of the INB. This is imperative to ensure that the new accord can live up to the One Health High Level Expert Panel definition of One Health and the intention behind it, and reduce the significant risk of future damage to human and animal health and our environment.

We thank you for taking our recommendations into consideration.

For more information please visit [Action for Animal Health website](#), or contact Ellie Parravani at ellie.parravani@thebrooke.org. Action for Animal Health is an expert group that would be willing to contribute and advise in support of the pandemic treaty process.

Our recommendations come from our [Call to Action for Animal Health](#)

Coalition members:

AU-IBAR
Brooke Action for Horses and Donkeys
Compassion in World Farming
Dogs Trust Worldwide



Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC)

Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed)

International Livestock Research Association (ILRI)

SEBI-Livestock (Centre for Supporting Evidence-Based Interventions in Livestock, University of Edinburgh)

Send a Cow

Soi Dog Foundation

World Veterinary Association (WVA)

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International (VSF International)