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One Health - the WSPA Approach

ABSON, Frances^a, BALASKAS, Margaret^a, CLARK, Michelle^a, FASSINA, Nicol^a, MUTEMBEI, Henry^b and KENNEDY, Mark^a

^aWorld Society for the Protection of Animals, London, United Kingdom, ^bUniversity of Nairobi, VERU, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract—One Health principle holds that human health is closely linked to animal health and welfare. Consequently, the development of integrated responses to global public health challenges is required. WSPA believes that global adherence to animal welfare principles will be instrumental in preventing emerging infectious diseases, including zoonotic diseases, from occurring, and thus help stop these diseases inflicting serious resource strains on national and international health services. We work with governments, intergovernmental and non governmental organisations and communities to ensure positive solutions are put in place for animals and people alike. Solutions include; working to control the transmission of canine rabies to people through sustainable mass dog vaccination programmes; preparing communities for disasters so that both their own and their animals' welfare is protected; and addressing the role that better welfare standards for wildlife play in the spread of zoonotic diseases.

Keywords— Animal Welfare, Animal Health, Human Health, Rabies, Disaster Preparedness, Wildlife Trade

1. Introduction

World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has nearly 50 years' experience in working with animals and communities. We work with communities, governments, intergovernmental and non governmental organisations to ensure that needs are addressed with positive solutions for animals and people alike; our focus is on collective action. There is rarely such a thing as a single solution to a single issue in any field and health is no exception. Human health is closely linked to animal health and welfare, and as a consequence, integrated responses to global public health challenges are required. For WSPA, these include; working to control the transmission of canine rabies to people through sustainable mass dog vaccination programmes, preparing communities for disasters so that their welfare and that of their animals is protected, and addressing the role of better welfare standards for wild life in the spread of zoonotic diseases. This paper aims to demonstrate how improvements in animal welfare globally have a positive impact on a range of human health and environmental issues.

2. Rabies

Throughout history rabies has been one of the most feared diseases, having the highest human case-fatality rate of any infectious disease (Rupprecht, Hanlon, & Hemachudha, 2002; World Health Organisation, 2013). In developing countries, someone dies of rabies every ten minutes, thus every day 150 people die of rabies, 55,000 every year, and annually 7 million people receive expensive post-exposure prophylaxis (Hampson, et al., 2009). In more than 99% of all cases of human rabies, the virus is transmitted via dogs (World Health Organisation, 2013). Mass dog culls are widely used in a misguided effort to stop the spread of rabies, yet there is no evidence that removal of dogs has a significant impact on dog population density or the spread of rabies (World Health Organisation, 2013). The World Health Organisation (2013) state that mass culling of dogs is ineffective and can be counterproductive to vaccination programmes and should not be an element of a rabies control strategy, whereas mass dog vaccination has repeatedly been shown to be effective in controlling canine rabies. WSPA's vision is of a world where dogs are no longer needlessly killed in response to the fear of rabies. Mass dog vaccination as part of a wider 'One Health' approach can help save human lives as well as protecting animals