Abstract - Meredith

One Health: Wildlife health and welfare – a human responsibility

One Health recognises the interconnections between animal and human health and the health of the environment on which we all depend. Since the 1990s, One Health is an increasingly recognised and unifying concept and approach for a wide range of governmental and non-governmental organisations concerned with animal and human health, wildlife conservation and environmental sustainability. This is most recently evidenced and emphasised by the 2021 global announcement of a newly formed unified operational definition of One Health from the WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP.

Human activities create an ever-increasing interface between humans and wildlife and are the drivers of global wildlife population declines and extinctions, which are increasing at an alarming and exponential rate. The recent COVID19 pandemic has further highlighted the role of wildlife health in a One Health approach, and zoonotic disease spillover from wildlife reservoirs accounts for the majority of emerging infectious diseases in humans and livestock. Wildlife are not only potential sources of disease, but also victims of disease, and sentinels for disease and ecosystem health. The major threats to wildlife are the result of many other drivers alongside pathogens and parasites, including habitat loss, globalisation of trade, land-use pressure, and climate change. Thus, healthy wildlife populations are of vital importance for human and animal health and welfare, and for conservation of biodiversity and wildlife management.

Whilst there is much focus on wildlife populations, the impacts of human activities, including disease, also have major effects on individual wild animal welfare. This presentation will provide a high-level overview from a One Health perspective, to demonstrate that wildlife health and welfare is not simply a human responsibility, but an absolute human necessity for our own health and the sustainability of the planet.

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