

Viewpoint

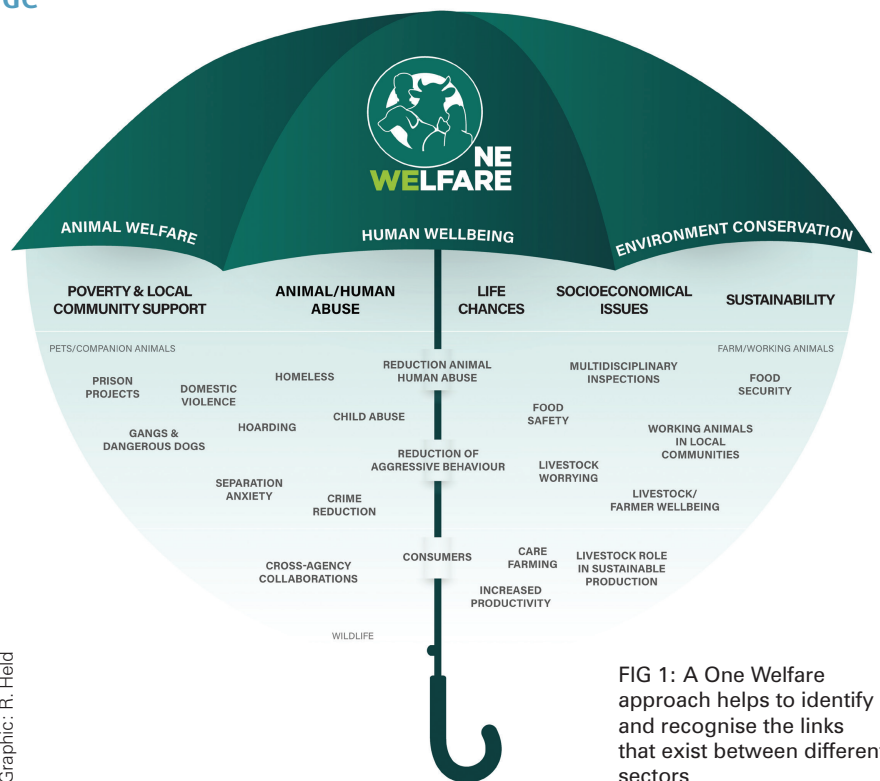
One Welfare – a platform for improving human and animal welfare

Adopting the concept of One Welfare could help to improve animal welfare and human wellbeing worldwide, argue **Rebeca García Pinillos, Michael Appleby, Xavier Manteca, Freda Scott-Park, Charles Smith** and **Antonio Velarde**

IN a similar way to the relationship between animal and human health, there is a strong link between animal welfare and human wellbeing. Here, we introduce the concept of One Welfare for wide debate, with an aim to improve animal welfare and human wellbeing worldwide. This article is a summary of a full article which appears online with this issue of *Veterinary Record*. A One Welfare approach complements the One Health approach and helps to empower the animal welfare and human wellbeing fields to address the connections between science and policy more effectively in various areas of human society, including environmental science and sustainability.

The concept of One Welfare recognises the interconnections between animal welfare, human wellbeing and the environment. Integrating this concept in existing projects could foster interdisciplinary collaboration to improve human and animal welfare internationally. One Welfare could also help to promote key global objectives such as reducing human suffering (eg, the abuse of vulnerable people), supporting food security and improving productivity within the farming sector through a better understanding of the value of high welfare standards, among others. It extends the approach of (and partially overlaps with) the One Health theme used for human and animal health.

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FIG 1: A One Welfare approach helps to identify and recognise the links that exist between different sectors

Why is a One Welfare approach necessary?

Initiatives to improve animal welfare are multifaceted, international and domestic public policy issues that must take account of not only scientific, ethical, and economic issues but also religious, cultural and international trade policy considerations. There is a range of multidisciplinary areas where different professions and disciplines can work together to achieve common goals and improve both human and animal wellbeing.

Some of the initial scientific papers on One Health focused mainly on clinical aspects, without integrating animal welfare and wellbeing considerations. Many still perceive animal health as separate to welfare and animal welfare as a cost rather than a benefit. However, as Colonius and Earley

(2013) have argued, 'The separation between human, social, and animal welfare is an artificial compartmentalisation. These disciplines rely on the same set of scientific measures and heavily depend on each other in an ecological context'.

A One Welfare approach is necessary to appreciate and utilise fully the direct and indirect benefits of animal welfare improvements to human wellbeing and also the links to the environment. This will help to increase the opportunities to improve ways of working for a more integrated approach, resulting in better animal welfare, as well as human wellbeing globally. Considering health and welfare together – because of the interconnections of human, animal and environmental factors – helps to describe context, deepens our understanding of the factors involved, and creates a holistic and

Box 1 – One Welfare outcomes

- **Reduction in animal and human abuse** Animals often act as indicators of human health and welfare, as can be seen in the link between animal abuse, family and social violence. Therefore, improving animal welfare has wider societal benefits through a human welfare/public health gain. A One Welfare approach could help to reduce the incidence of crime and violence internationally, in particular domestic violence and abuse of elderly people and children.
- **Improved animal welfare – addressing social problems** Within inner city areas, it is not unusual for cases of animal cruelty and abuse to be related to poverty and social problems. There are also specific inner city issues such as homelessness and dog fighting. These are all complex areas involving animal welfare, socioeconomic indicators and offences in other areas. Improvements in animal welfare at this level would support interventions tackling other social issues within inner cities.
- **Links between improved animal welfare and food safety** Stress and poor animal welfare result in increased release and virulence of a number of zoonotic diseases, including *Salmonella*. Evidence shows, for example, that better animal welfare for farm animals results in improved food safety.
- **Improved animal welfare – improved human wellbeing** Animal hoarding is an area where animal welfare and human wellbeing are interlinked. Identifying and tackling hoarding will help to improve not only animal welfare, as animals end up suffering from neglect, but also that of the human hoarders, as evidence suggests that animal hoarding is connected to psychiatric issues generally linked to historical and current socioeconomic and dysfunctional mental health concerns.
- **More efficient multidisciplinary approaches** A more joined-up and multidisciplinary approach could be more efficient and effective. For example, animal welfare indicators can be used as a sign of a farmer being successful or failing to cope and could be used to detect poor farmer health/wellbeing. Equally, poor farmer wellbeing detected by a medical practitioner could indicate a risk of poor animal welfare on the farm. Different professionals could all play a part in improving both farm animal welfare and farmer wellbeing.
- **Improved life chances – human rehabilitation and animal rehoming** Programmes in prisons and offenders' institutions have demonstrated that rehabilitation of dogs for rehoming can be beneficial both to the people and the animals involved. Animal-assisted interventions can help to build self-esteem and reduce reoffending in people.
- **Improved animal and farmer welfare – improved farming productivity** Farmer wellbeing is directly correlated with animal welfare. Productive farms with well-kept animals are generally associated with positive farmer wellbeing. Practical evidence demonstrates that improved farm animal welfare results in superior yields (eg, better hoof care improves the health of cows and healthy cows have a better milk yield).
- **Improved animal welfare – addressing poverty and local community support** Where there are poor states of human welfare, there are often poor states of animal welfare. Animal welfare, including animal health, should be an essential part of all community development programmes, particularly in developing world rural areas where people depend on livestock farming or keeping. Promoting the integration of animal welfare as part of general livelihood improvement programmes is seen as a key to success.
- **Improved animal welfare – improved food security and sustainability** Developing communities that care for their animals help to ensure continuity of farming and enhanced availability of animal-derived products, and there are positive effects on wider areas of societal concern such as climate change, farming sustainability and disaster management.
- **Increased biodiversity – improved human wellbeing** Environmental and conservation issues also contribute to the One Welfare concept. Studies show that an increased number of wild birds in a given area has a positive impact on human wellbeing in the area. Conversely, biodiversity loss can have highly detrimental consequences for human wellbeing.

solutions-oriented approach to health and welfare issues. Integrating One Welfare with One Health will open the doors to more holistic approaches that cover all aspects of the issues considered, rather than only part of the equation.

The links between animal welfare, human wellbeing and the environment affect a large number of areas and our suggestion is to subdivide One Welfare into a number of topic-specific areas, as listed in Box 1.

Why bother?

Why think in terms of One Welfare?

Professionals working in the area of animal welfare generally consider human wellbeing alongside animal welfare. For example, companion animal veterinarians promote the human-animal bond, regulatory veterinarians guard public health and ensure a safe food supply for humans and animals alike, and veterinary researchers work at the interface of human and animal health and welfare. A One Welfare approach embodies this

mission. Providing a name helps those not so familiar with these links to identify and recognise that such links exist (Fig 1).

The current body of animal welfare knowledge is substantial enough for the One Welfare concept to stand by itself; however, an integrated approach with One Health is preferable to maximise efficiency and improvements.

The introduction of this concept within the research community has the added benefit of helping to identify research outputs with added value and mutual benefit between animal welfare, human wellbeing and/or the environment by introducing the key search term One Welfare. Using the keyword #onewelfare will enable readers and researchers to readily identify publications studying the added value of a particular study in a multidisciplinary way within the area of welfare and wellbeing. This is already happening in the One Health arena and the impact continues to grow; complementing this with One Welfare will unlock further

potential for cross collaboration and improved efficiency in relevant areas.

A One Welfare approach will help to enhance people's understanding of animal welfare benefits, which can be complex and, in certain situations, quite subtle, especially in the enhancement of human welfare. Overall, emphasising an internationally recognised One Welfare concept will contribute to raising awareness of all the positive benefits of improving animal welfare, strengthening ongoing projects and facilitating identification of projects where animal welfare improvements add value to society.

- This article is a summary of a full article that is published online with this issue of *Veterinary Record* as Supplementary Data.

Reference

COLONIUS, T. J. & EARLEY, R. W. (2013) One welfare: a call to develop a broader framework of thought and action. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 242, 309-310

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