

Letters to the Editor

Ecological roles in one health

The recent commentary from Drs. Nielson and Eyre¹ on tailoring veterinary medicine to emphasize one health, along with the subsequent letter to the editor² and authors' reply,³ raised some issues related to veterinary education and one health. In both the commentary and letters, the authors discussed several important one-health issues, including food security, comparative medicine, and translational medicine. Additionally, the authors mentioned ecological medicine in the context of one health and veterinary education.

However, we believe the authors did not adequately present the many ecological roles for veterinarians in the one-health field and, by extension, the need for educational courses related to these roles. We also were surprised that the term conservation medicine did not appear, leaving ecological medicine as the possible surrogate.

There is little disagreement that veterinarians are a critical part of one health, with veterinarians now integral to this emerging transdisciplinary approach. As practitioners of animal health, they have the ability to provide one health-centered care for animals—including humans—as well as for the environments on which all life is dependent. There is nearly universal agreement that to be successful, the one health movement must take a “planet to individual” patient approach. This holistic approach is mentioned by Kelly et al.,² who suggest that clinical career tracks focusing on “ecological medicine” do not go far enough to address food safety. However, we contend that ecological (conservation) medicine must go beyond simply ensuring global food security. To focus on feeding the people of the world without also focusing on protecting the planet itself is counter-intuitive.

As the planet's human population approaches 8 billion, global

food security must remain at the top of the agenda for the veterinary profession and within a veterinary one health curriculum. However, to focus solely on translational medicine and food safety runs the risk of downplaying the importance of biodiversity, the environment, and their impact on human health. Environmental sustainability, livestock needs, and the needs of humans have inevitably intersected. Those in the veterinary profession are in a unique position in regards to this intersection, in part because of the breadth of our education, which allows us to think holistically.

As veterinary schools integrate one-health courses within their curricula, we would do well to look at current work within the greater veterinary community. The AVMA, Student AVMA, American College of Zoological Medicine, and American Association of Wildlife Veterinarians have programs to encourage a holistic approach to various aspects of veterinary medicine as they apply to one health.⁴ Many academic institutions focus on the importance of one health. Postgraduate certificates and Master and Doctorate degrees in one health are available at universities internationally.^{5,6} We are excited at the opportunities for continued growth within the veterinary profession. By bringing together all specialties within one health, we may more

effectively address the health challenges that threaten public health, wildlife conservation, and environmental sustainability.

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Readers are invited to submit letters to the editor. Letters may not exceed 500 words and 6 references. Letters to the Editor must be original and cannot have been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Not all letters are published; all letters accepted for publication are subject to editing. Those pertaining to anything published in the *JAVMA* should be received within 1 month of the date of publication. Submission via email (JournalLetters@avma.org) or fax (847-925-9329) is encouraged; authors should give their full contact information, including address, daytime telephone number, fax number, and email address.

Letters containing defamatory, libelous, or malicious statements will not be published, nor will letters representing attacks on or attempts to demean veterinary societies or their committees or agencies. Viewpoints expressed in published letters are those of the letter writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the AVMA.