

# One Health Day

EDITOR: More than half of the infectious diseases that people suffer from, especially in more recent times can be spread by animals or through handling their products. Diseases like rabies, brucellosis, anthrax, plague, Rift Valley fever and Ebola have occurred in several parts of the country this year alone. Such diseases are known as zoonotic diseases.

With a good animal surveillance system, it is possible to detect such diseases while they are still within animals, such as when many birds die at the same time in the case of bird flu. However, we usually detect them after they have started affecting people.

It is, therefore, important to recognise the fact that the human health is connected animal health as well as the environment that we share. Therefore, collaborative efforts of many experts such as disease detectives, physicians, laboratories and veterinarians working across human, animal and environmental health are vital in improving the health of people and animals including pets, livestock and wildlife. Such efforts put in place constitute a concept known as the 'One Health Approach'.

This concept recognises that the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment. Technically, One Health is defined as a collaborative, multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach; working at local, regional, national and global level with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognising the interconnection between people, animals, plants and their shared environment. In Uganda, such efforts have been in place for many years although there has been a tendency for sectors to work in isolation. Recently though, a memorandum of understanding was signed among four government sectors (Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Ministry of Water and Environment and the Uganda Wildlife Authority) to strengthen One Health efforts. With this, a National One Health Platform (NOHP) was formed to strengthen these efforts.

Apart from focussing of the zoonotic illnesses, One Health efforts are also targeted at biosafety and biosecurity issues as well as the ever-rising concern of anti-microbial resistance.

Since 2016, every year on November 3, One Health efforts are celebrated in what is called the International One Health Day. On this day, various activities are carried out to raise the flag even higher by further creating awareness on the need for collaboration and sensitising people on zoonoses.

In Uganda, this year, commemoration of the day will include formulation of District One Health teams and bringing to light Uganda's priority zoonotic diseases which are rabies, anthrax, plague, avian influenza, trypanosomiasis, brucellosis, viral haemorrhagic fevers (Rift Valley fever, Crimean Congo haemorrhagic fever, yellow fever and Ebola).

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