

ANIMAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

Fact Sheet



Animals, like people, need to be in good health to lead a good life, to provide companionship and services (pets and working animals), and to provide safe and nutritious food products (food-producing animals). Like people, animals also get sick and need medicines too.

Animal health products are a key contributor to sustainable development and a healthier planet through ensuring the supply of safe, healthy food as well as high standards of health and welfare for animals and people.

- **Animal health products support efforts to produce safe, quality food at an affordable price to help maintain animal health and welfare and improve the economic viability of farms**
- **Healthy animals produce high quality animal produce on an efficient and sustainable basis**
- **Healthy animals enable farmers to produce more food with reduced natural resource inputs) and less waste outputs minimising the impact on the environment**

Animal health contributing to sustainability

The animal health industry strives to be ahead of the game when it comes to animal diseases, especially the zoonotic ones that pass between man and animal and continues to invest in the research and development of advanced solutions to protect both animal and human health with regard to disease transmission. In terms of food-producing animals, the industry provides an array of tools to support efforts to produce safe, quality food at an affordable price in a manner that maintains both the environment and animal welfare while helping to improve the economic viability of farms. At the same time healthy pets and working animals provide a range of benefits and support to people, helping to create a more sustainable society.

Sustainable food production

Sustainable agricultural practices involving the Responsible Use of animal medicines allow us to ensure healthy animals to meet current food demands. Food productivity has soared in the last 50 years thanks to new technologies and production methods and animal health has had a key role to play in terms of reproductive success and growth rate which are central to sustainable livestock production.

- **Economic benefit:** The OIE has reported that diseases in food producing animals globally amount to a loss of 20% in production. Unhealthy animals also often waste feed and require additional labour inputs. Healthy animals produce high quality animal produce on an efficient and sustainable basis.
- **Environmental benefit:** Healthy animals enable farmers to produce more food with reduced natural resource inputs (feed, water, energy, soil) and less waste outputs (manure, CO₂ production) minimising the impact on the environment.
- **Social benefit:** Optimised animal health helps cut mortality rates and reduces losses from disease. Increased productivity of safe, nutritious food at more affordable prices allows farmers to compete internationally enhancing their quality of life and benefiting society as a whole.

The role of animal health will become increasingly important in the future as the demand for animal protein is expected to double by 2050, and 70% of this additional food supply will have to come from modern technologies according to FAO.

Sustainable companionship

Healthy pets provide an array of social and economic benefits for people by giving emotional support, reducing feelings of stress and loneliness and increasing social contact, helping to create a more sustainable society. Medical alert and assistance dogs assist people with disabilities or serious illnesses, alerting them to an impending fit or helping with everyday tasks to provide more freedom and independence. A healthy assistance animal can enjoy a longer, more sustainable relationship with his owner.

- **Economic benefit:** Dog owners are physically more active, have lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels which helps ease the strain on healthcare resources. People with medical alert and assistance animals can avoid incidents such as hypoglycaemic episodes where medical attention is needed, meaning less of a strain on A&E and ambulance services, which overall benefits public health systems.
- **Social benefit:** Keeping a pet healthy helps both children and adults to learn to be responsible, develop good self-esteem and helps positive emotional development. Therapy pets are reported as having positive effects on people's quality of life in nursing homes, hospitals, and care centres for the disabled making them more sociable and encouraging interaction and activity.

Sustainable health

According to the OIE, of the nearly 1,500 infectious diseases affecting people, almost two thirds can pass between animals and people (zoonoses). Additionally, 75%¹ of emerging infections amongst humans are believed to have originated in animals. By preventing and curing animal diseases, veterinary medicines have a positive impact in both animal and human health.

For example, through the successful use of vaccines against salmonella in poultry, human cases have reduced by almost 50% in the EU since 2004. The societal costs of salmonella outbreaks are considerable and include direct medical costs, productivity losses and premature death, as well as considerable costs associated with control efforts. In 2008 the average cost per case of human salmonella in the EU was estimated at over 1,000 euros.

Conclusion

Just 3% of all medicines sales are for animals, yet this tiny segment supports around 50,000 jobs and contributes to the viability of Europe's 10 million farmers, the continued health, happiness and wellbeing of families in Europe and the development of extensive leisure industries. The animal health industry annually invests €400 million in research and development to develop new products and retain and upgrade existing ones. Healthy animals are of vital importance to the health and welfare of Europe's people and to the sustainability of its economy.

Useful links

- IFAH-Europe: [Secure and Sustainable Food Supply](#) and [Social impact and education](#)
- European Platform for the Responsible Use of Medicines in Animals: www.epruma.eu
- IFAH white paper: [The costs of animal disease](#)
- ¹OIE study: [Listing and Categorisation of Priority Animal Diseases, including those Transmissible to Humans](#)

IFAH-Europe is the representative body of manufacturers of veterinary medicines, vaccines and other animal health products in Europe. IFAH-Europe's membership covers 90% of the European market for veterinary products. Member companies invest over €400 million in research and development every year. IFAH-Europe promotes a single market in veterinary medicines across the EU ensuring the availability of medicines to protect the health and welfare of animals.

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