WVA GLOBAL SEMINAR ON ANIMAL WELFARE
Theme: One Welfare

The WVA selected the theme One Welfare with the aim of discussing and analyzing in depth with animal welfare experts the meaning of One Welfare concept from different aspects (e.g. scientific, academic, political, social etc.) and to evaluate if One Welfare is a complement to the One Health concept or shall be dealt separately.

WVA president, Dr. Johnson Chiang opened the seminar pointing out that Animal Welfare is one of the five priorities of the WVA and it is closely interconnected with human welfare and consumer wellbeing as “good animal welfare make better protein quality”.

Dr. Rebeca García Pinillos, the founder of the One Welfare Framework Project presented her framework to improve animal welfare and human wellbeing. She introduced the One Welfare Umbrella which encompasses animal welfare, human wellbeing and environment conservation. She continued by saying that One-Welfare recognizes that Animal Welfare, biodiversity and the environment are all connected with human well-being. One Welfare includes the following areas; Animal and human abuse and neglect, Socio-economic aspects, AW of livestock, food safety, productivity and food security, Improved life of people and animals and biodiversity and conservation. She gave some examples where preventing animal abuse and neglect can support a reduction in violence and neglect to vulnerable humans, improved animal welfare relates to better food safety, animals’ contribution to humans, such as prisoner’s rehabilitation or animals helping people with post-traumatic stress disorders. She concluded by saying that animal welfare has also an impact on the economy since good welfare practices help to improve livestock production, food security and sustainability.

Dr. Teresa Villalba, representing the Animal Welfare sector at the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Food and Environment gave a presentation on Animal Welfare throughout history – from the protection against cruelty to One Welfare. She started by saying that “We need to understand history to understand the presence.” Teresa divided the history of AW in three parts: 1863 to 1966; 1966 to 2005; and 2006 to now. She showed that the welfare discussion has more been driven by religious considerations than political ones. Initially the focus was on the protection or raising moral standards of people, rather than on the suffering of animals. Only in relatively recent decades the animal itself, as a sentient being that can suffer, has been brought more to the center of the discussion. Equally, it is only since 1990th that the veterinary profession is identifying its role in the protection of Animal Welfare.
Dr Lotta Berg, a professor in animal environment and health at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, and one of the WVA Animal Welfare 2018 Awards winners gave a presentation on “Animal Welfare and the Interconnections with Antimicrobial Resistance” explaining that if animals’ basic behavioral needs are not met, it will create frustration which affects the immune competence of the animals. Increased risk for infection and the need to use antibiotics. Keeping animals under substandard conditions is made possible with antibiotics. However this is not sustainable. In general, the more antibiotics are used; there are higher risks for the development of AMR. Therefore, the key is to improve animal husbandry practices, to keep animals under proper conditions they can cope with, to prevent disease and to reduce the needs to use antimicrobials, to the benefit of the health and welfare of animals and people and the eco-system. She concluded by saying that “One Welfare is not only about keeping the animals happy and healthy, but also to keep the farmers, consumers and the public happy and healthy”.

Nadine Tod representing the International Veterinary Students’ Association presented the students’ perspective of One Welfare pointing out that often animal welfare is not a priority at university and the One Welfare concept is totally new for veterinary students. In addition, with overloaded curricula those students are often facing and need to deal with, create also human well-being issue. She went on by highlighting the need for more knowledge and understanding of animal abuse including bestiality, fighting, hoarding, puppy mills, animal smuggling and the link between violence against animals and people. She concluded by saying “the earlier we (students) learn about it, the better”.

Finally, Daniela Battaglia, representing the FAO presented Animal Welfare Good Practices in Agriculture Development - Applying the One Welfare approach and highlighted the importance of the animal welfare for the animal health and productivity and for achieving the UN sustainable developments goals. She mentioned an initiative aiming at taking welfare into consideration in all policies and practices developed by FAO. She asked the participants a number of questions in order to launch the panel discussions sessions. The following points were raised:

- No much sense in trying to set generic standards for animal welfare. The context needs to be taken into consideration. It is better to focus on what can be done in different situations than to strive for overall standards.

- Animal welfare needs to be better taught in the vet schools. It appeared that there are differences between the schools.
• Politicians have difficulties to address AW issues (e.g. bull fighting). There is a need for a strong public awareness and concern. Once it starts shifting it can accelerate rapidly.

• Concept of a happy animal? Is there a definition of a happy animal? Is it something we can recognize or score? It probably more an expression that is useful in discussions than a factor that can be measured.

• There is a real need to educate Veterinary students but also the citizens about the animal welfare which is the prerequisite for One Welfare.

WVA Executive Director, Jan Vaarten, concluded the seminar by saying that One Welfare is a new emerging field that is critical for human animal well-being and for the ecosystem. All the stimulating presentations and interesting discussion about this new topic deserves to be further developed and spread, in the interest of animals, people and the environment.

The next WVA Global Seminar on Animal Welfare with the theme of Disaster Management will take place during the WVAC2019 in San Jose, Costa Rica.