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# Fact Sheet

## USDA “ONE HEALTH” APPROACH – FACT SHEET

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The health of animals, people and the environment are inextricably linked. Environmental health can affect human and animal health through contamination, pollution and even natural conditions that can lead to new infectious agents. The “One Health” approach is the collaborative effort of multiple health science professions (veterinarians, physicians, public health officials, epidemiologists, ecologists, toxicologists and others+), along with their related disciplines and institutions – working locally, nationally, and globally – to attain optimal health for people, domestic farm and food animals, wildlife, plants and our environment.

A One Health approach embraces the idea that a disease problem impacting the health of humans, animals, and the environment can only be solved through improved communication, cooperation, and collaboration across disciplines and institutions. Using this collaborative approach, USDA, with its partners, seeks to maintain or reduce health risks to animals, humans, the environment and society. USDA has gained in-depth knowledge about, for example, zoonotic diseases (diseases that can move from animals to people or people to animals) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) through its work on the agricultural environment, animal health and food safety.

Zoonotic pathogens (disease causing organisms) can evolve and move from one organism to another and through the environment. Sometimes they mutate or evolve into more virulent strains, and sometimes they evolve to resist countermeasures such as the application of antibiotics, other bacteria or viruses, and other challenges. Investment in understanding the ecology of zoonoses is necessary to develop strategies to address them.

Within USDA, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Agricultural Marketing Service, Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, Food Safety and Inspection Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service and National Institutes of Food and Agriculture are all actively engaged in ongoing projects to better understand these and other complex issues at the animal, human and ecosystem interface.

USDA also partners with other U.S. government agencies – such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Environmental Protection Agency, tribal Nations – to prevent and control problems that affect animal and plant health, human health and the environment. USDA emphasizes increased collaboration with

other agencies to leverage infrastructures overseas to provide training and technical assistance on One Health issues.

USDA serves the nation through its commitment to producing wholesome and nutritious foods, preserving the safety of meat, poultry and egg products entering our country, through inspection services, and preserving the health, welfare and humane treatment of food animals while ensuring the health and safety of humans through our One Health partnerships.

Agriculture Secretary Vilsack established the USDA One Health Joint Working Group (JWG) in 2009 to serve as a central point of coordination for discussions, review and decisions regarding one health issues, such as zoonotic disease and AMR, whether they are initiated internally or externally to USDA. USDA uses the One Health approach to coordinate, manage and communicate its research and technology recommendations going forward. The USDA One Health JWG coordinates the work of these agencies for a comprehensive approach to address multiple facets of these issues.