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WVA/WAVMA Position Statement on the Role of Veterinarians in Aquatic Animal Health

BACKGROUND

The growth of aquaculture in the global food chain as well as increasing concerns of environmental contamination by medicines used in aquaculture, makes it imperative that the highest possible quality of animal health services should be provided. Veterinary education establishments around the world have curriculum that educate veterinary students in the practice of aquatic veterinary medicine and those that have not incorporated this specialization into their curriculum, are encouraged to do so. Continuing education courses are also available to further the education of graduate veterinarians. The Competent Authorities should ensure that the veterinary personnel working in the domain of aquatic animal health/hygiene are provided with the relevant extra-courses in animal health, animal welfare, epidemiology, environment protection and legislation.

Veterinarians have important competencies for aquatic animal health in the areas of food safety (zoonosis, food hygiene, sanitary regulations), health management (including animal welfare), research, epidemiological surveillance, prevention, control and risk analysis of diseases (endemic, transboundary, emerging and re-emerging). Veterinarians are therefore well placed to play a leading role in aquatic animal health and welfare management, while recognizing and respecting the contributions of other aquatic animal professionals and technical experts.

There are now increasing numbers of highly educated, qualified veterinarians available who are willing and able to practice veterinary medicine in the field of aquatic animals, using their skills to prevent, diagnose, and treat, animal disease or other conditions.

POSITION STATEMENT

The WVA and World Aquatic Veterinary Medicine Association (WAVMA) urge their members to engage with the competent authorities and the veterinary statutory bodies within their regions, nations and states to regulate the practice of veterinary medicine in the field of aquatic animals and to restrict such practice to licensed/registered veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals who work under the supervision of veterinarians.