



WORLD VETERINARY
ASSOCIATION



WVA/24/PS/Rev1

PRESIDENT

Dr John de Jong

PRESIDENT ELECT

Dr Isao Kurauchi

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Dr Rafael Laguens

COUNCILLORS FOR AFRICA

Dr James Ouma
Dr Nandipha Ndudane

**COUNCILLOR FOR ASIA
and OCEANIA**

Dr Chou Chin-Cheng
Dr Mark Schipp

COUNCILLOR FOR EUROPE

Dr Petra Sindern
Dr Slaven Grbić

COUNCILLOR FOR LATIN AMERICA

Dr Arturo Carlos Mejorada Porras
Dr Helio Blume

**COUNCILLOR FOR MIDDLE EAST
and NORTH AFRICA**

Dr Anis Bouraba
Dr Salah Al-Shami

**COUNCILLORS FOR NORTH
AMERICA**

Dr Enid Stiles
Dr Shannon Mesenhowski

**COUNCILLOR FOR INTERNATIONAL
REGIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

Dr Olatunji Nasir

**COUNCILLOR FOR INTERNATIONAL
DISCIPLINE-CENTRED
ORGANISATIONS**

Dr Hilton Klein

1050 Brussels, Belgium

E secretariat@worldvet.org

www.worldvet.org

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

Position Statement

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

Many establishments of veterinary education around the world have curricula that educate veterinary students in the practice of aquatic veterinary medicine; those that have not incorporated this specialization into their curriculum, are encouraged to do so in a meaningful way.

Continuing education courses are also available to further the education of Veterinary graduates.

Competent Authorities should ensure that the veterinary personnel working in the domain of aquatic animal health/hygiene are provided with relevant education and professional development opportunities in animal health, animal welfare, epidemiology, environmental protection, policy, and legislation¹.

Background

Due to the growth of aquaculture as a global food source, and recognizing concerns over the potential for environmental contamination with medicines used in aquaculture, it is imperative that the highest quality of animal health services should be provided.

Veterinary medicine covers the healthcare of aquatic animals², which includes aquatic livestock, marine wildlife, and pets. Veterinarians specializing in aquatic animals undertake

¹ WOAHP PVS Pathway – Tool for the evaluation of performance of aquatic animal health services.

<https://www.woah.org/app/uploads/2021/12/v4-pvstoolacua-fnl.pdf>

²WOAH Aquatic Health Code states that aquatic animals means all viable life stages (including eggs and gametes) of fish, mollusks, crustaceans, and amphibians originating from aquaculture establishments or from the wild.

various responsibilities such as animal care, disease diagnosis, surgical procedures, assessment of management methods, and prescribing treatments, all aimed at safeguarding animal health and public well-being. They also play a vital role in safeguarding public health by ensuring a safe, secure food source and mitigating the risks associated with drug residues and environmental contamination, thereby maintaining the safety and integrity of the food supply chain.

The veterinary profession has also a key role in ensuring that aquaculture³ systems are sustainable - optimising the health and welfare of the fish produced, from hatchery to processing, whilst minimising any potential impact on the environment. Further, veterinarians are the best source to advise on the deployment of appropriate vaccines and medications as part of a holistic preventative medicine strategy, optimising fish health. In turn, this will help to reduce the use and/or misuse of veterinary medicines and minimise the likelihood of the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Veterinarians also bring important competencies in aquatic animal health relative to 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.

³ <https://www.fao.org/fishery/en/aquaculture>