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WSAVA Unveils Major 'One Health' Initiative at 2010 Congress

A major initiative to ensure the importance of companion animals within the global 'One Health' movement was launched by the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) at its recent 2010 Congress in Geneva. At the event, the WSAVA announced the formation of a One Health Committee which will be dedicated to driving forward One Health-related programmes and research at a global level.

The new committee will be chaired by Professor Michael Day, Professor of Veterinary Pathology at the University of Bristol Veterinary School. Funded by WSAVA and a consortium of industry sponsors, it will have a three year programme of activity commencing with an inaugural meeting on January 13-14 in Orlando, USA.

The One Health or 'One Medicine' movement is supported by a range of global human and animal health bodies, including the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). It recognises the close link between diseases affecting humans, domestic animals and wildlife in our shared environment, particularly in the face of developments such as global warming, and is working towards the unification of the medical and veterinary professions.

Commenting on the formation of the WSAVA's One Health Committee, Professor Michael Day, said: "Discussions on One Health have tended to focus on the interaction between human populations, wildlife and production animals while the key role of companion animals has largely been overlooked. The WSAVA One Health Committee will focus upon current and emerging zoonotic infectious diseases for which companion animals play an integral role in transmission or act as reservoirs of infection. Major examples are rabies and leishmaniosis."

Professor Jolle Kirpensteijn, President of the WSAVA, added: “The new Committee will also facilitate research into spontaneously arising diseases of companion animals that model human conditions. There is a wide spectrum of degenerative, neoplastic and immune-mediated diseases of the dog and cat with close similarity to human equivalents and the availability of current genomic technology means that major lessons for human medicine could be learned from investigating these animal disorders.

Finally, it will address lifestyle issues affecting human and pet populations, including the global obesity epidemic and the human-companion animal bond. Through the Committee, we will implement programmes which improve education and knowledge of One Health issues within the companion animal veterinary sector and beyond.”

Members of the WSAVA One Health Committee include veterinary scientists with top-level involvement in companion animal infectious disease or comparative medicine research including representatives from the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Institute of Health (NIH).

The WSAVA, which has just finished a year of celebrations to mark its 50th anniversary, represents over 80 member nations and provides a programme of global science and education for the veterinary care of small companion animals. For more information on WSAVA visit www.wsava.org.

For further information:

Rebecca George, George PR

Tel: 01449 737281/07974 161108