

# The Impact of Veterinary Leadership on Public Health and Animal Welfare



In a world where human, animal, and environmental health are more interconnected than ever, the role of veterinary leadership is central to public health and animal welfare. At the heart of this movement is the **European Board of Veterinary Specialisation (EBVS)**, which certifies and supports 38 veterinary specialties across Europe. This work not only upholds the highest standards in veterinary medicine but also directly contributes to broader societal outcomes in public health, animal welfare, sustainability, and economic stability.

## Understanding the Link Between Veterinary Medicine and Public Health

Veterinarians are frontline defenders in the [One Health framework](#)—a concept that recognises the interdependence of people, animals, plants, and our shared environment, the planet. They play a critical role in preventing and managing zoonotic diseases (those transmitted between

animals and humans), monitoring antimicrobial resistance (AMR), and ensuring safe food production systems.

For example, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) estimates that over 60% of known human infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin](#). Diseases such as avian influenza, rabies, and brucellosis are just a few examples where veterinary surveillance and intervention have helped reduce transmission risks. Veterinary epidemiologists, pathologists, and microbiologists—all supported by EBVS's rigorous certification standards—work tirelessly to detect outbreaks early and inform evidence-based responses.

## Protecting Animal Welfare Through Specialisation

Animal welfare is not just a moral or ethical issue—it is also a key determinant of animal health, productivity, and the sustainability of food and trade systems. Veterinary specialists in areas such as **animal behaviour**, **anaesthesia**, **internal medicine**, and **animal production** help optimise conditions for animals in clinical, agricultural, and research settings.

[The European Union has increasingly recognised the importance of animal welfare in legislation](#), and veterinary specialists play a key role in implementing and advising on policy. Research supports the connection between high welfare standards and reduced disease prevalence, ultimately benefiting both animals and the people who depend on them for food, companionship, and livelihoods.



## Reducing the Burden on Human Healthcare Systems

Preventative care in veterinary medicine can significantly reduce the strain on public healthcare systems. By managing zoonotic threats and ensuring the safe use of antimicrobials in animals, veterinary professionals help to control health risks before they affect human populations.

Moreover, the economic value of animal health cannot be overstated. According to the [European Commission](#), animal diseases cost the EU billions in lost productivity and healthcare-related spending. Veterinary specialists help mitigate these costs through diagnostics, treatment, vaccination programmes, and public education—ultimately improving quality of life across human and animal populations.

## Contributions to Sustainability and Food Security

[Veterinary specialists](#) are key contributors to sustainable agriculture and food systems. Whether through managing herd health, improving reproductive efficiency, or advising on environmentally conscious farming practices, their expertise supports a stable food supply while minimising environmental impact.

For example, specialisation in bovine health management or poultry veterinary science can lead to better disease control and resource use in animal farming. In turn, this reduces the need for antibiotic treatments, decreases greenhouse gas emissions per kilogram of food produced, and enhances the overall safety of the food chain.

## Enhancing Pandemic Preparedness

Veterinary specialists are vital in preventing, preparing for and responding to pandemics. Their work in surveillance, diagnostics, and disease modelling contributes directly to national and international efforts in pandemic preparedness and prevention. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many veterinarians across Europe supported testing facilities, advised on zoonotic transmission risks, and contributed to research on virus reservoirs in animals.

[The translational medicine approach](#)—where findings in veterinary science are applied to human medicine—also fosters innovation in diagnostics, treatments, and vaccines. This is especially evident in fields like pharmacology, toxicology, and comparative pathology, where collaboration between medical and veterinary professionals drives scientific advancement.

## **Veterinary Expertise as a Pillar of European Public Health Policy**

As public health becomes increasingly complex, policymakers across Europe must leverage veterinary expertise to shape regulations that protect both human and animal populations. This includes integrated AMR strategies, animal welfare legislation, environmental health standards, preventing disease outbreaks and food safety protocols. The EBVS, through its network of certified diplomates, offers a robust infrastructure to support this collaboration. By maintaining high standards of veterinary specialisation and ongoing professional development, the EBVS ensures that experts are ready to contribute at every level—from research and clinical practice to policy making and public communication.



## **Conclusion: Elevating Veterinary Leadership in Society**

### **Recognising Veterinarians as Public Health Partners**

The work of veterinary specialists extends far beyond clinical care. Through their impact on One Health, public health protection, animal welfare, and sustainable agriculture, they are vital contributors to a healthier, more resilient society. As we face global challenges like antimicrobial resistance, emerging diseases, and climate change, the need for strong veterinary leadership has never been clearer.

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