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ONE HEALTH COMMISSION FORMED TO PROMOTE COLLABORATION ACROSS HUMAN, ANIMAL, AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES

Washington, D.C.—August 26, 2009—A new national commission, the One Health Commission, has been established to spotlight the connections between human, animal, and environmental health, as well as the benefits of proactive and collaborative approaches toward better health for all.

The formation of the Commission comes at a time of heightened concern by policy makers and public health officials about the potential spread of newly emerging infectious diseases such as H1N1 Influenza, as well increasing threats posed by other emerging zoonotic diseases, food- and water-borne diseases, and environmental change.

The Commission represents a call for greater cooperation across multiple disciplines at the local, national, and global level to achieve optimal health for people, domestic animals, wildlife, and the environment. To that end, the Commission's goals include developing an integrated public health strategy; raising awareness of the value of "one health" nationally and internationally; developing an interdisciplinary research agenda for the "one health" movement; and implementing "one health" principles into demonstration research and educational projects.

According to Dr. Ronald Atlas, who was elected chair of the Board of Directors and who represents the American Society for Microbiology, "The One Health Commission brings together eight of the major professional organizations involved in health research, education, and practice. Given that 75% of newly emerging human infectious diseases originate within wildlife and domesticated animals, and that global warming and other environmental changes are likely to have significant health impacts, it is essential that the medical, veterinary, and public health sectors join forces."

Other members of the Board of Directors are Dr. Albert Osbahr III, vice-chair, representing the American Medical Association; Dr. Michael Cates, secretary-treasurer, representing the American Veterinary Medical Association; Elizabeth Bishop, representing the Association of Academic Health Centers; Dr. John Fischer, representing the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; Dr. James Fox, representing the Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges; Dr. Susan Polan, representing the American Public Health Association; and Dr. Wile "Chip" Souba, representing the Association of American Medical Colleges.



Dr. Roger Mahr, past president of the American Veterinary Medical Association and a long-time advocate for the “one health” concept, will serve as chief executive officer of the new Commission. “The convergence of human, animal, and environmental health dictates that we embrace the ‘one health’ concept now,” Dr. Mahr said. “We live in a changing environment populated by humans and animals living increasingly interconnected lives. This creates unique health challenges which require integrated solutions and more collaboration across health science professions, academia, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and industry.”

That interconnection between human, animal, and environmental health is playing out in back yards, farms, and health facilities around the world. In addition to the many infectious diseases shared by animals and people, some of the most serious health issues affecting society and driving up healthcare costs—including obesity, diabetes, and cancer—are common to pets and people. And, a number of health conditions—including respiratory ailments—have a direct link to the quality of our environment.

The Commission’s initial action plan calls for hosting a national One Health Summit this fall and conducting a National Academies study on “one health” in 2010. The study will examine the interactions of humans, animals, and the environment in broad terms, which can lead to improvements in human health, animal health, and environmental quality.

The One Health Commission incorporated as a nonprofit organization on June 29, 2009, and held its first Board of Directors meeting on August 14, 2009. Initial funding for the creation of the One Health Commission includes a grant provided by The Rockefeller Foundation.

For more information, visit www.onehealthcommission.org.