



## **What is One Health all about?**

The term 'One Health' refers to the interconnectedness and interdependency of human, animal (wild and domestic) and environmental health. The resurrection of this ancient concept began in the late 1990s when ecologists and wildlife conservationists realized that our 'systems' of specialized professionals had forced us into silos that never interact. The concept was embraced by the veterinary medical profession and catapulted into the human health domain with growing awareness of diseases that are transmitted from animals to people such as AIDS, Avian Influenza, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, Nipah and Ebola viruses, to name a few. Our understanding of the need for a One Health, multidisciplinary approach to complex problems expanded further with the realizations that urbanization and economic development can affect human, animal and environmental health, that incidence of vector-borne zoonoses such as Babesiosis, Bartonellosis, Lyme Disease, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Zika virus and others can be altered by changing climate and landscapes and pose serious health and economic threats to human and animal populations, that understanding diseases and conditions shared by people and animals can lead to preventive and therapeutic measures beneficial to both, that food and water safety and security for all living things depends on conservation and soil health, that antimicrobial resistance among people and animals has an unavoidable environmental component, and that we cannot have good human health and welfare without good animal, plant and environmental health and welfare. One Health has many faces. Indeed, *every* profession must be at the table if we are to bridge our current siloed systems to achieve long term health goals for people, animals, the environment and, in turn, to enhance global security.

## **What is the One Health Commission?**

Chartered as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the [One Health Commission](#) (OHC) is a prominent, international body of action-oriented, One Health-dedicated individuals and organizations. Its programs are designed to serve as a gateway for the active exchange of One Health-related information and knowledge, sharing of resources, and collaborative initiatives that extend beyond disciplinary boundaries. Based in central North Carolina and

working globally, it is governed by a Board of Directors.

## **Our Mission**

Our mission is to connect, create, educate and support networks to improve shared health outcomes and well-being of people, animals and plants and to promote ecosystem resilience through a collaborative, local to global One Health approach.

## **Achievements**

### ***Connecting the Global One Health Community***

The Commission provides opportunities for One Health leaders around the world to share their programs and initiatives. Its First ([2014](#)) and Second ([2016](#)) International Who's Who in One Health online webinars drew over 1,500 participants from more than 35 countries. The OHC manages a growing [Global One Health Community listserv](#) of over 8,000 international participants, distributes a monthly global [One Health Happenings newsletter](#) of One Health news, events, opportunities, announcements and publications and maintains an ever-expanding global directory of '[Who's Who in One Health](#)'. Its website serves as a [One Health Library](#) and a clearinghouse for One Health [events](#), [scientific publications](#), relevant popular media [news items](#), training, employment and funding [opportunities](#). It also provides global outreach and representation of One Health at major international conferences.

### ***Creating and Leading One Health Actions***

Many of our 'wicked' health challenges, like antimicrobial resistance, can be controversial. The Commission provides a '[safe zone](#)' for interprofessional conversations, projects and actions. Volunteer [One Health Action Teams](#), made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds identify public health and education gaps and work to address them. Examples include the OHC [Bat Rabies Education Team](#), the [International One Health Education Task Force and its US subgroup](#), the [One Health-Social Sciences Initiative](#) and the newly forming One Health-Ecology and Environment Team. Yet to be formed are teams to address One Health Comparative Research and Medicine, One Health-Food Safety and Security, One Health Advocacy and Public Policy, and others. In 2016 the OHC led an international stakeholder partnership to create an annual, global [One Health Day](#) which is now celebrated around

the world every year on November 3. [One Health Day 2016](#) registered over 155 events in more than 35 countries. [One Health Day 2017](#) saw similar global participation. In 2017 the OHC partnered with the US Environmental Protection Agency on a citizen science [National Pet Health Survey](#) that collects health information on dog and cat companions and will be used by scientists, pet owners and the public to inform human health.

### ***Educating about One Health and One Health Issues***

The Commission communicates credible, science-based information on One Health issues to the public through venues such as the bi-lingual 'What is One Health' [public service radio](#) announcement and YouTube [video](#). It hosts free global [educational webinars](#) that raise awareness and educate about the economic, public health and global health security benefits of a One Health approach to shared challenges. It provides its online webinar platform to unincorporated One Health groups such as the Washington DC One Health Academy that would not otherwise be able to share their One Health initiatives with a global audience. Since 2014 it has hosted or supported over 20 such webinars on topics such as [Antibiotic Resistance](#) and '[Understanding Bartonella: A One Health Perspective](#)'. Its One Health Education Initiative prepares and compiles [K-12 education resources](#) made freely available to teachers. Its 2015 [letter to the White House](#) was co-signed by many organizations and individuals, encouraging the creation of One Health platforms by the U.S and United Nations agencies.

### ***Engaging and Nurturing the Next Generation of One Health Professionals and Leaders***

The OHC provides students with leadership opportunities by bringing student representatives from human, animal, environmental and plant health domains onto its [Board of Directors](#). With OHC support these students have created an independent [International Student One Health Alliance \(ISOHA\)](#) for which the Commission provides an online meeting platform, [webpages](#), a [student listserv](#) and encouragement for student-led One Health projects. The Commission is working with ISOHA to identify Student One Health groups around the world to facilitate formation, very early in their careers, trans-disciplinary relationships among emerging health professional leaders. The Commission awards two of four \$2,000 [One Health Day Student Events Competition Awards](#) each year to multidisciplinary student teams.



## **The Future**

The One Health Commission seeks to sustain and expand its programs, to increase its global impact promoting interdisciplinary approaches to health challenges shared by people, animals and the environment. Its goal is to make One Health the default way of operating at all levels of academia, research, and governments around the world. In 2018 the top two priorities on the Commission's wish list are to add staff to support its programs, especially a Development Officer to identify and leverage new funding to support current and future OHC programs. Additional priorities include supporting One Health student leader internships and scholarships that will develop their capacity to apply and tailor One Health approaches to complex, locally meaningful health issues, providing financial support for OHC Action Teams and for the new International Students for One Health Alliance, compiling a bank of One Health expert speakers, offering more educational webinars to a global audience, and developing One Health advocacy materials for One Health supporters to use and share.



## **Summary**

One Health, our '[Ray of Hope for the Future](#)', has gained great traction globally in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The One Health Commission provides leadership, platforms and resources to connect hundreds of One Health advocates and groups around the world, allowing them to combine forces to break through disciplinary silos and re-orient collective thinking and practice towards interactive systems frameworks.

If the One Health concept resonates with you, if you believe that the Commission performs a function vital to the shared health of people, animals and the environment on planet earth, please consider how you and your organization can play a part in this global effort.

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