



CANADIAN VETERINARY
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Speaking notes submitted by Dr. Henry Ceelen
on behalf of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)
to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
on its study of the perception of and public trust in the Canadian agricultural sector
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Representing the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA)

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, thank you for the opportunity to appear before your committee as a representative of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association.

I am a veterinarian licensed to practice in the Province of Ontario. I am the current chair of the National Issues Committee of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (or CVMA as I will refer to our national association). I have been in private veterinary practice for 38 years, primarily engaged in large animal (mainly dairy cattle) clinical medicine and surgery. I am Past-President of the Ontario Association of Bovine Practitioners (2010) and of the Canadian Association of Bovine Veterinarians (2015) and am the current Secretary-Treasurer of the latter organization. In my current capacity as a practitioner and CVMA member, I work in close association with livestock producers, especially dairy farmers, and have in my professional network colleagues who work as specialists or generalists on the wide range of farmed animals in the agri-food sector in Canada.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association provides a national and international forum for over 7,200 veterinarians working in all of Canada's provinces and territories as private practitioners, researchers, educators and public servants. In addition, the CVMA counts 7,300 veterinary technicians and technologists as affiliate members. Veterinary practitioners provide services to owners of pets, livestock and other animals. In addition to their contributions to public health and food safety, veterinarians help farmers market healthy and humanely-raised animals which are vital to Canada's reputation as a producer and exporter of billions of dollars of high quality animals and animal products.

Veterinarians provide unique expertise on the health and welfare of all types of animals and have a professional obligation through the Veterinarian's Oath to ensure the welfare of animals under their care. Specifically, veterinarians have expertise in animal health and disease; knowledge and understanding of the biology of domesticated animals; practical experience and understanding of the care and management of animals; practical experience in the recognition of the signs of suffering in animals; and an understanding of the interdependencies that exist between animal health, human health and the environment.

As members of a self-regulated profession who serve the public and society, veterinarians earn and maintain the public trust through engagement in principle-guided ethical practice.

Veterinarians hold themselves, their colleagues, and their profession to a high standard of ethical conduct, reflecting the core values and principles of the profession. The public have the reasonable expectation that the care and service provided by veterinarians reflects these core values. As a veterinarian licensed in the province of Ontario, I follow a code of ethics that is comprised of core values, namely compassion, trustworthiness, transparency, competence, professionalism, and respect.

I believe that the commitment our profession has to its core values is largely responsible for the positive public perception of veterinarians. Studies have shown that the public trust their veterinarians. A 2015 study in the UK for example (VetFutures) demonstrated that 94% of respondents had a high level of trust in their veterinarians and close to 80% were satisfied with services provided. There is no reason to think that veterinarians are not perceived in a similar way in Canada.

Public trust research by the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity (CCFI) over the past several years has clearly shown that Canadians care deeply about availability of healthy, affordable food, humane treatment of farm animals, and food safety with regard to, for example, foodborne disease and drug residues. Considering the high level of trust in veterinarians and the key role we play in supporting producers and sustainable animal agriculture, it is clear that our profession has an important responsibility to help ensure that the public perception of the agri-food system remains positive. As veterinarians we take this responsibility very seriously.

In delivering on its responsibilities, our profession strives to use its scientific knowledge and skills for the benefit of animals and for society in general. This is what is called the **One Health** approach, that is, an approach to medicine that recognizes that the health of humans, animals and the environment are inextricably linked. Veterinarians and registered veterinary technicians/technologists play a key role in improving the health and welfare of the animals they treat in a manner that supports One Health.

As one example, the One Health approach is particularly relevant to the development of collaborative strategies for responsible antimicrobial use in animal and human populations, and through those efforts to significantly reduce the level of drug resistance in antimicrobial populations.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association recognizes antimicrobial resistance as a growing threat in Canada and around the world. It is crucial that public health, veterinary, regulatory communities and food animal agriculture work together to minimize the emergence and continued spread of antimicrobial resistance for benefit of all.

Through a One Health approach, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association has helped Canada's commitment to responding to the threat of antimicrobial resistance, as described in Health Canada's document, [Tackling Antimicrobial Resistance and Antimicrobial Use: A Pan-Canadian Framework for Action](#).

Held up as an example of leading guidance on antimicrobial stewardship was the document *Veterinary Oversight of Antimicrobial Use — A Pan-Canadian Framework for Professional Standards for Veterinarians*, developed in 2016 as a collaboration between the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association and the Canadian Council of Veterinary Registrars. The

Veterinary Oversight Framework represents a significant step by the veterinary profession in Canada towards addressing the veterinary responsibilities for oversight of antimicrobials as a result of changes in federal policies and regulations regarding antimicrobials.

Thanks to funding from Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, the CVMA reviewed and renewed its guidelines for the prudent use of veterinary antimicrobial medications from 2008. In December 2018, CVMA launched an online platform of guidelines to support Canadian veterinarians in making prudent decisions on the appropriate and responsible use of antimicrobials they prescribe in animals. These new guidelines currently address six species groups (swine, poultry, beef, dairy, small ruminants and companion animals). With continued funding, we hope to expand the guidelines to equine and aquaculture and to also provide resources on the use of alternatives to antimicrobials.

The CVMA has also developed a concept and design for a pilot veterinary antimicrobial use **surveillance** system that will focus initially on animal feed. At present, a significant majority of antimicrobials (by weight) used in food animal agriculture are administered via the feed or water fed to them. Participants in workshops who collaborated in this design included veterinary practitioners, veterinary regulatory bodies, federal and provincial government representatives, industry officials (producers, feed and animal health industries) and academics. We anticipate a decision from AAFC on project funding in the very near future.

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association looks forward to continuing its collaboration with stakeholders and agricultural partners in continuing to work to maintain the confidence of Canadians in the agri-food system through promoting animal health and welfare, applying One Health principles and bringing to bear the knowledge, skills and experience of the veterinary profession.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude on behalf of the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association for granting us the opportunity to speak to your committee today.