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One World, One Health- Africans' Integrated Approach to Wildlife, Livestock and Human Health Pays Dividends for Conservation and Development

A new book from WCS and IUCN looks at today's Africa, and how and where wildlife conservation can be a 'win win'; land use of choice. It features some of the most innovative conservation thinking in Africa today and provides real-world examples of the critical role animal health plays in both environmental conservation and economic development.

Experts from East and Southern Africa have some grass roots ideas for tackling the immense challenges Africa faces at the wildlife / domestic animal / human health interface— and they hope the West is listening.



A new book, **Conservation and Development Interventions at the Wildlife/Livestock Interface: Implications for Wildlife, Livestock and Human Health**, features some of the most innovative conservation thinking in Africa today and provides real-world examples of the critical role animal health plays in both environmental conservation and economic development. The book, and the related initiative the Wildlife Conservation Society, the IUCN Species Survival Commission Veterinary Specialist Group, and partners have helped launch (Animal Health for the Environment and Development or AHEAD), focus on several themes of critical importance to the future of wildlife, animal agriculture and, of course, people: competition over grazing and water resources, disease transmission, local and global food security, zoonoses, and other potential sources of conflict related to land-use decision-making and the reality of resource constraints. Addressing these issues is of critical importance to Africa's people, to Africa's wildlife heritage, and to Africa's global trading partners. Clearly, animal health issues, and their implications for human health and livelihoods, must be addressed by any regional development or conservation strategies — including those involving transboundary 'peace parks'— if they are to succeed. Few cross-sectoral solutions have been offered until the publication of this book.

There is probably no region on earth where animal health policies and their downstream consequences have had as tangible an effect upon the biotic landscape as in Africa, southern Africa in particular. In many parts of the world, land-use choices are often driven by government (domestic and/or foreign) incentives or subsidies that can favor unsustainable agricultural practices over more ecologically sound natural resource management schemes. Of course, livestock will remain critically important both culturally and economically in much of the region. But provided with a better understanding of disease epidemiology and grasslands ecology, land-use planners can begin to take the true costs associated with both disease control schemes and environmental degradation related to livestock management practices not well-suited to a particular ecosystem into account, and therefore more often favor a return to natural production systems. For example, in semi-arid parts of southern Africa, foot and mouth disease control programs, implemented to support beef production for an export market, may not be as profitable or as environmentally sustainable as a return to multi-use natural systems emphasizing endemic wildlife species (consumptively and non-consumptively). When it comes to animal health programs and policies in transboundary landscapes, where domestic as well as wild animals have opportunities to cross international borders, making the right decisions becomes even more critical. Launching AHEAD with a focus on southern and East Africa, particularly with the World Parks Congress being hosted by South Africa, was indeed a very logical decision for us.

The benefits of a more holistic land-use management perspective also extend to pastoralists, people who derive the bulk of their subsistence directly from livestock — people who are often marginalized in African economies and political systems. By recognizing the ecological and economic significance of pastoralist land-use practices, conservation and development programs can lead to improved livelihoods via more strategic and efficient mechanisms for animal (and human) health care delivery, and for disease surveillance. Of course the extraordinary benefits of sound management at the wildlife/livestock/human interface reach well beyond pastoral communities. One need only look at global travails with SARS or avian influenza, foot and mouth disease, or "mad cow," to see the tremendous social and economic importance of these issues.

"We hope that conservation and development colleagues from within and, as importantly, outside of the health science professions will find this volume thought-provoking, insightful, practical, and applicable to their daily work," notes Dr. Steve Ososky, Senior Policy Advisor for Wildlife Health for the Wildlife Conservation Society, long-time member of the World Conservation Union's Veterinary Specialist Group, and the book's editor. "As socioeconomic progress demands sustained improvements in health for humans, their domestic animals, and the environment, we hope we've been successful in drawing attention to the need to move towards a 'one health' perspective— an approach that is the foundation of our conservation work, and a theme pervading this unique volume."

Osofsky, S. A., Cleaveland, S., Karesh, W. B., Kock, M. D., Nyhus, P. J., Starr, L., and A. Yang, (eds.). 2005. *Conservation and Development Interventions at the Wildlife/Livestock Interface: Implications for Wildlife, Livestock and Human Health*. IUCN, Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK. xxxiii and 220 pp.

