



Animal  
Medicines  
Australia

# Embracing the benefits of animal health



2025 ELECTION PRIORITIES





## Animal Medicines Australia

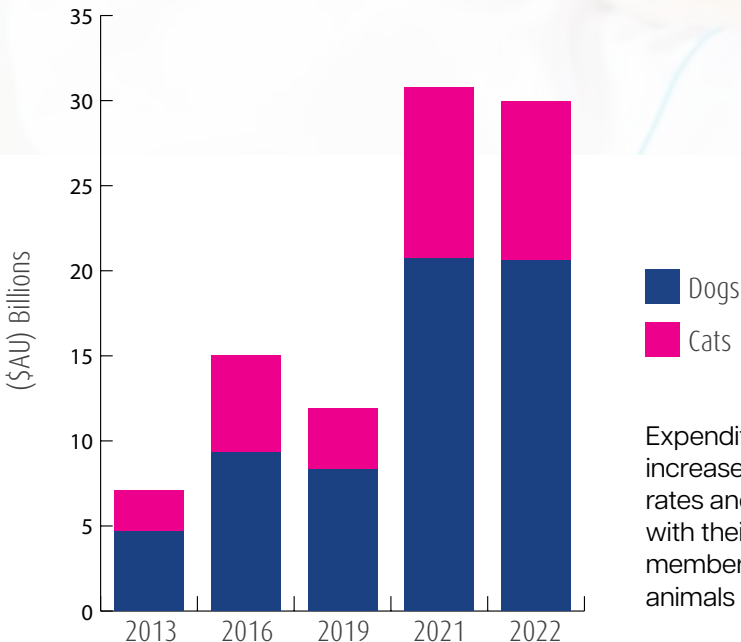
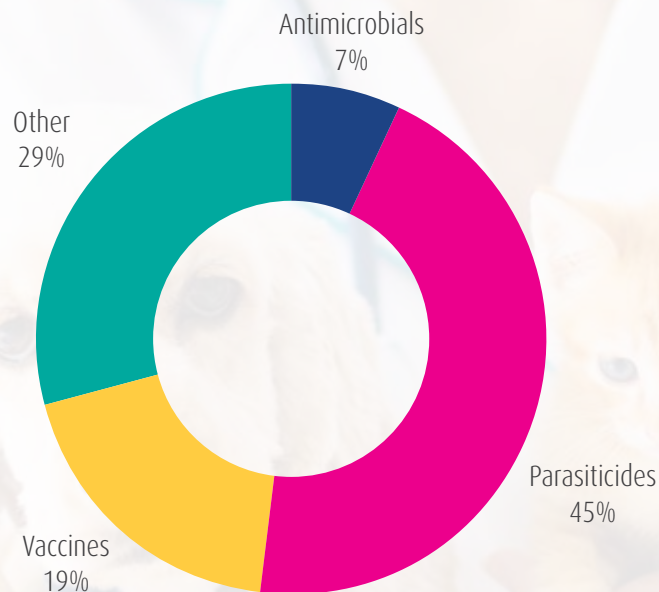
Animal Medicines Australia (AMA) is the peak industry body representing the leading animal health companies in Australia. Our members are innovators, manufacturers, registrants and suppliers of a broad range of veterinary medicines. Our members work at the cutting edge of animal health science to prevent, control and treat disease across the livestock, equine and companion animal sectors. Products from our member companies account for more than 90% of all animal health products in Australia.



# Industry snapshot

Preventative **health products**, including vaccines (19%) and parasiticides (45%) make up a large proportion of total annual product sales, while antimicrobials comprise around 7% of total annual product sales and the remainder (29%) including products such as pain relief, anti-inflammatories, nutritional supplements etc.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the economic contribution of Australia's animal industries has been dominated by livestock production – the nominal gross value of Australian's livestock and livestock products is expected to increase to \$36 billion in 2024-25.



Expenditure on **companion animals** has, however, increased considerably with increasing ownership rates and the evolving relationship Australians have with their pets – as they are increasingly seen as a member of the family. Expenditure on companion animals increased to around \$33 billion in 2022.

<sup>1</sup> APVMA, Annual Sales Data: <https://www.apvma.gov.au/about/accountability-and-reporting/annual-product-sales-data>



## 2024 Election Priorities

AMA seeks commitments from the Government in supporting the following priorities:

1. **Creating incentives for investment in animal medicines**
2. **Funding public and community benefits of better animal health and welfare**
3. **Supporting livestock sector to respond to challenges from climate change**
4. **Nationally consistent companion animal policies**
5. **Biosecurity and pandemic preparedness**

AMA and its members have a long-standing commitment to an animal health industry that is responsible and sustainable. Our members' products are essential tools that can help meet economic, environmental and social challenges. We look forward to continuing to work with government to improve animal health outcomes across the livestock, equine and companion animal sector.



## Summary of recommendations

1	Recommitment to best practice regulation in animal health to protect regulatory rigour, including in monitoring and compliance activities, manufacturing licensing, labelling and pharmacovigilance.
2	Establish a National Working Group to deliver national harmonisation of control of use for animal medicines.
3	Increase data protection for veterinary medicines to at least equal those given to agricultural chemicals to provide incentives for innovation.
4	\$8 million over 5 years for APVMA post-market monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities.
5	\$9.5 million per year to expand the Commonwealth Prac Payment to provide financial support for veterinary medicine students undertaking practical work placements in rural and regional areas and
6	\$5.76 million per year for a Rural Bonding Scheme to forgive HECS-HELP debt to encourage early career veterinarians to practice in rural and regional areas.
7	Invest \$10 million towards developing and implementing a pilot program for the provision of support and veterinary services for vulnerable people and their pets.
8	Increase investment in emergency preparedness and response by at least \$250 million per annum.
9	Fund the development and implementation of a mechanism that allows for consistent secure payment for veterinary services delivered in natural disasters and to unowned animals, including wildlife.
10	Fund the Zero Net Emissions from Agriculture Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) to conduct an independent review of the benefits of animal health for inclusion in carbon accounting systems.
11	Invest \$8 million over 5 years towards establishing a coordinating committee comprising government, industry and community representatives to develop and implement a National Companion Animal Policy.
12	Invest \$5 million towards supporting the establishment and recognition of new qualifications, training programmes and accreditation frameworks that directly contribute to improved pet health and welfare.
13	Invest \$6 million per annum for 3 years towards developing and implementing a coordinated approach to biosecurity and pandemic preparedness by bringing together governments, academia and relevant industries.
14	Invest \$11 million per annum towards expanding Australia's comprehensive human health AMR surveillance program (AURA) to include animal health.
15	Fund the development of an animal vaccination strategy and defined implementation plan.

AMA members support high regulatory standards to ensure products on the Australian market are safe, effective, of consistent quality and will not pose undue risks to animals, users, consumers or trade markets. Our priority is to ensure that the APVMA provides independent, high quality, timely, predictable, science- and risk-based pre-market assessments of veterinary medicines, and effective, timely and meaningful post-market compliance monitoring and enforcement.

## Regulatory streamlining and efficiency

### APVMA Operational Reforms

Australia has a rigorous and comprehensive regulatory system controlling the manufacture, registration, distribution, sale and use of veterinary medicines. An independent, science-based regulator is essential for public confidence in the rigour of regulatory assessments and decisions, as well as ongoing monitoring and compliance activities.

AMA supports the government principles of best practice regulation<sup>2</sup>, which specify that regulation should be appropriate, proportionate to risk, reflect the nature of the products and the way in which they are used, and protects the integrity of industries that rely on veterinary medicines as critically important inputs.

Targeted reform in some areas, conducted in consultation with stakeholders, to avoid unintended consequences and protect regulatory rigour, is supported (e.g. monitoring and compliance, manufacturing licensing, labelling and pharmacovigilance). AMA's priorities are to:

- Ensure any reforms protect the integrity, scientific reputation and independence of the regulator,
- Support reforms that will provide efficient and effective pre- and post-market regulation that is proportionate and relevant to veterinary medicines,

- Obtain greater data protection periods for veterinary medicines that align with data protection periods given to agricultural chemicals, and
- Promote international harmonisation through use of definitions, standards and requirements of global standard-setting bodies such as the Veterinary International Cooperation on Harmonization (VICH) and Codex, to reduce regulatory duplication and encourage innovative products to be brought to the Australian market.

### Enhancing national consistency in animal health control of use

While the APVMA is responsible for the regulation of veterinary medicines up until the point of sale, regulation of control of use is the responsibility of State and Territory governments. The lack of consistency between the State and Territory regulations has long been a source of frustration for veterinarians, livestock producers, the animal health sector and other relevant stakeholders. This inconsistency can create and exacerbate duplication within the regulatory framework and unnecessary red tape that can have negative impacts on animal health, the environment and trade.

A nationally consistent control of use framework that is aligned with overall policy objectives would provide for a seamless approach from registration and approval of veterinary medicines, to the sale and supply of products and their use in our livestock, pets and wildlife. Such a framework would encompass all elements of consistency with respect to control of use, control of use licensing and the role of permits.

AMA recommends that the government establish a National Working Group to deliver national harmonisation of control of use for animal medicines.



<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, The Office of Impact Analysis: <https://oia.pmc.gov.au>



## Increase incentives for innovation

### Increase data protection period for animal health products

The animal health sector has a strong history of innovation and an ambitious goal of a world where the threat of disease is significantly reduced, fewer animals are lost or suffering from disease, food security and safety are improved, and lower emissions are associated with animal production.

The veterinary medicine sector is one of Australia's most highly regulated industries, with significant regulatory requirements regarding efficacy, safety and quality assurance. The majority of animal medicines available in Australia are currently manufactured overseas, alongside small-volume, high-value global exports of Australian-made veterinary medicines.

Innovation in veterinary medicines could include new chemical entities, new formulations, delivery mechanisms, packaging, compliance aids and other platforms to assist in the delivery of healthcare for animals.

Innovation requires scientific and risk-based approaches and policy settings that aim to eliminate barriers, provide seamless systems between registrations and product uses, incentivise development of local infrastructure and resources, facilitate collaboration, support regulatory innovation, promote unencumbered trade of animals and animal products, support animal welfare of both livestock and companion animals, and meet the challenges of social license.

Australia's business operating environment has important ramifications. The Australian market is small, which limits the ability of companies to recover the costs of bringing a new product to the market. Particularly for new and emerging technologies, there may be minimal regulatory guidance or standards available, which can stifle the opportunities for new technologies to be brought to the local market. Streamlining interactions between industry, stakeholders and government, and recognising intellectual property and other incentives that support commercial decision-making, will encourage investment in Australia.

Australia's regulatory environment must support efficient and appropriate evaluation of new technologies and encourage the adoption of innovations across broad areas to address animal health challenges, such as genetics, remote sensing, management systems, information technology and robotics.

Australia's ability to deliver on sustainability goals and emissions targets, efficiency, trade (in animals and animal commodities) and economic goals is dependent on the commercialisation and adoption of new

technologies, and regulation that is effective, efficient, fit for purpose, and consistent with government principles of best practice regulation.

Currently, a long-standing anomaly between data protection periods provided for crop protection and veterinary medicine products puts innovative animal health companies at a disadvantage compared to their crop protection counterparts. AMA has long advocated for correction of this anomaly to deliver equivalent data protection periods for veterinary medicines and crop protection products.

## Monitoring, compliance and independence of the regulator

### Public investment in monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities

Approximately 95% of the APVMA's \$43 million annual budget is currently funded through registration fees, charges and sales levies. There are, however, additional beneficiaries of compliance and enforcement activities, including consumers, livestock producers, governments and veterinarians. A 100% cost recovery funding model prioritises the registration of products. Investment by the Government for regulatory activities relating to compliance and enforcement, and chemical reconsideration, will ensure that the APVMA can focus on those activities that seek to avoid the regulatory system, including unregistered animal health products, counterfeit products and inappropriate compounding.

Australian farmers, veterinarians and pet owners rely on the APVMA to assure them that animal health products and veterinary medicines are safe and effective. Community confidence in the ongoing safety and efficacy of important veterinary medicines, which are crucial to the health and welfare of our pets and livestock, will be enhanced by Government funding of APVMA's post-market compliance activities.

### Recommendations:

1. **Recommitment to best practice regulation** in animal health to protect regulatory rigour, including in monitoring and compliance activities, manufacturing licensing, labelling and pharmacovigilance.
2. Fund the establishment of a **National Working Group to deliver national harmonisation** of control of use for animal medicines.
3. **Increase data protection for veterinary medicines** to at least equal those given to agricultural chemicals to provide incentives for innovation.
4. \$8 million over 5 years for **APVMA post-market monitoring, compliance and enforcement activities**.

## Supporting the veterinary workforce

In 2021, veterinarians were included on the Priority Migration Skilled Occupation List, meaning that employer-sponsored nomination and visa applications for veterinarians will be given priority processing. Nevertheless, veterinarians remain an occupation considered to be in shortage in the 2022 Skills Priority List report<sup>3</sup>. In 2022, veterinary nurses were also assessed as being in shortage.

Declining numbers of veterinarians and support staff across all sectors, including livestock and companion animal clinical practice, research and academia, industry, government and pathology, poses significant challenges not just for animal health outcomes but also for food production and trade, innovation, environmental outcomes and biosecurity.

As detailed by the Australian Veterinary Association, the drivers behind the veterinary workforce shortage are varied and complex. While a long-term decline in demand in the livestock sector has resulted in a lack of available veterinary services in rural areas, the increased demand resulting from a rapid growth in pet ownership has also resulted in changes in industry structure.

Compounding these challenges, prolonged and significant periods of generational and societal change, workload pressures, chronic underfunding and under-resourcing of the profession have contributed to burn-out and poor mental health outcomes across the sector. The *Australian Veterinary Association Veterinary Wellness Strategy* found that 66.7% of respondents said they had experienced a mental health condition at some stage (compared with 61.8% of the general population) and that, tragically, veterinarians are up to four-times more likely than the general population to die by suicide – and twice as likely as other health professionals<sup>4</sup>.

Financial pressures, negative interactions with the community and on social media, as well as long working hours combined with high caseloads were highlighted as drivers for poor mental health outcomes in the veterinary profession.

Meeting the challenges facing the sector in retaining and maintaining a sustainable workforce, as well as providing better support models for veterinary care and educating the community regarding appropriate

behaviour in veterinary practices, will assist in alleviating some of the pressure on veterinary services and contribute to improved mental wellbeing of veterinary staff.

AMA recommends the Government develop measures to support the veterinary workforce, including:

- \$9.5 million per year to expand the Commonwealth Prac Payment to provide financial support for veterinary medicine students undertaking practical work placements in rural and regional areas and
- \$5.76 million per year for a Rural Bonding Scheme to forgive HECS-HELP debt to encourage early career veterinarians to practice in rural and regional areas.

## Supporting veterinarians and vulnerable pet owners

The relationship between humans and their pets, known as the human-animal bond, is a mutually beneficial relationship between people and animals, influenced by behaviours considered essential for the health and wellbeing of both. Human and animal health sectors, however, tend to operate in silos – meaning that policy development rarely delivers positive outcomes for both people and their pets.

**The veterinary profession experiences suicide rates significantly greater than those of the general population - veterinarians are four times more likely to die of suicide than the general population and twice as likely to die of suicide than any other healthcare profession.**

The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) commissioned a report by Superfriend, which recommended action across multiple areas including financial stress, working conditions and client relations.<sup>5</sup> AMA supports the AVA's request for further government support to address the mental health crisis in the veterinary profession.

Currently, many veterinary practices and charities provide support and assistance to people in crisis situations, often in the form of “in-kind” labour. People experiencing crisis situations such as homelessness, domestic or family violence, or mental health crises, tend to be socially isolated and experiencing increased stress. A pet often provides significant emotional and social support and can even provide short-term health

<sup>3</sup> Australian Government, Jobs and Skills Australia: Skills Priority List; <https://www.jobsandskills.gov.au/data/skills-shortages-analysis/skills-priority-list>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Veterinary Association: Veterinary Wellness Strategy;

<https://www.ava.com.au/siteassets/resources/thrive/documents/ava-short-report-research-findings.pdf>



benefits – but, due to a lack of available support, pets can also act as a barrier to seeking assistance.

Veterinarians, veterinary nurses and administrative staff are generally not trained to work with vulnerable people who are experiencing crisis, grief, trauma or emotional distress. Veterinary social workers are trained in engaging with vulnerable people in highly stressful or emotional scenarios and can take responsibility for the human health aspects of veterinary care, thereby enhancing patient outcomes, improve mental health and social connection and provide critical support for veterinarians and other animal health providers.

AMA recommends the Government develop a mechanism for assisting the veterinary profession in the provision of support services and ongoing care to vulnerable people and their pets.

### Supporting emergency veterinary care for natural disasters and injured wildlife

As our climate changes, extreme weather events are occurring at an accelerated pace – with adverse impacts on the health and welfare of our pets, wildlife and livestock.

The Government has committed to providing up to one billion dollars over five years for disaster risk reduction, through the Disaster Ready Fund (DRF), administered by the National Emergency Management Agency from 1 July 2023. Assistance is available for animal care during natural disasters through the DRF for livestock producers, as well as pet owners, including emergency care. However, these programs are linked to specific natural disaster events and may not be sufficient for the increasingly frequent extreme weather events, particularly in regional and rural areas,

and for severe events not declared as ‘disasters.’ AMA supports calls from the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) to increase investment in emergency preparedness and response by at least \$250 million per year.

The veterinary sector bears significant economic costs (often in the form of “in-kind” labour) in maintaining animal health and welfare on behalf of the broader overall community – particularly during natural disasters or by caring for unowned animals (e.g. wildlife and strays). Veterinarians have a legal responsibility to provide care for unowned animals and not only forego their usual income but also bear the cost of labour and materials associated with that care – in a manner that is not replicated in any other sector.

AMA supports the Australian Veterinary Association’s recommendation to develop a national animal disaster fund to allow consistent secure payment for veterinary services delivered in natural disasters and develop a mechanism for supporting veterinarians providing veterinary care to unowned animals (outside of natural disasters), including Australia’s unique wildlife. This could be modelled on a similar process to that currently being implemented as a part of the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) program – whereby the relevant costs and logistical arrangements are agreed with the private veterinary sector and payment of funds etc. is activated as required.

### Recommendations:

5. **\$9.5 million per year to expand the Commonwealth Prac Payment** to provide financial support for veterinary medicine students undertaking practical work placements in rural and regional areas and
6. **\$5.76 million per year for a Rural Bonding Scheme to forgive HECS-HELP debt** to encourage early career veterinarians to practice in rural and regional areas.
7. **Invest \$10 million towards developing and implementing a pilot program** for the provision of support and veterinary services for vulnerable people and their pets.
8. **Increase investment in emergency preparedness and response** by at least \$250 million per annum.
9. **Fund the development and implementation of a mechanism that allows for consistent secure payment for veterinary services delivered in natural disasters** and to unowned animals, including wildlife.



Australia has a variable, unique and often challenging environment and Australian farmers have always been adaptable and keen to embrace innovation to help them meet these challenges. The increased severity of environmental conditions and frequency of natural disasters like drought, flood, storms and bushfires bring with them an even greater need for innovative solutions. Changing environmental conditions will also alter the distribution and behaviour of many animal and insect species, in turn leading to changing distributions of vector-borne diseases.

Global population changes are expected to generate a 35% increase in demand for food by 2030, particularly for animal protein from meat, eggs or dairy. At the same time, climate change will continue to place growing pressures on agricultural production, especially on the quantity, quality, reliability of supply and sustainability of various commodities.

To continue to meet the growing demands for animal protein, both domestically and for our important export markets, Australian livestock farmers will be required to not only improve productivity, but also their efficiency – that is, improving productivity while simultaneously reducing their environmental impact and ensuring agricultural operations remain economically viable.

#### **Incorporate animal health improvements into carbon accounting systems**

Improving animal health offers a cost-effective and sustainable opportunity for livestock industries to

reduce emissions and manage climate risks. In addition to the significant productivity and sustainability benefits, healthy animals produce less emissions of key climate gases, including carbon dioxide and methane.

A recent Oxford Analytica report commissioned by HealthforAnimals, ***Animal health and Sustainability: A Global Data Analysis***, found that improving animal health and husbandry practices could reduce emissions by 16 to 30%.<sup>5</sup> This would enable livestock producers to increase production to meet the needs of an additional 1.9 billion people without increasing current emissions.

The report found that a 10% decline in global animal disease levels is associated with an 800 million tonne decrease in livestock greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Disease among cattle was shown to increase GHG emissions by up to a quarter per unit of milk and more than double per beef carcass. Further, every animal lost to illness and disease requires another to be raised elsewhere to meet market demand – representing emissions and resources used that are not subsequently converted into food.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) report, ***Pathways towards lower emissions: A global assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation options from livestock agrifood systems*** found that improving animal health has the “potential to reduce emissions from the livestock sector significantly, while still meeting the additional 20 percent animal protein demand projected by 2050.”<sup>6</sup> The report

Improving animal health has the “potential to reduce emissions from the livestock sector significantly, while still meeting the additional 20 percent animal protein demand projected by 2050”

– The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (UNFAO) report, *Pathways towards lower emissions: A global assessment of the greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation options from livestock agrifood systems*

<sup>4</sup> Superfriend (2022): Australian Veterinary Association Veterinary Wellness Strategy: <https://www.ava.com.au/siteassets/resources/thrive/documents/ava-short-report-research-findings.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> HealthforAnimals: Animal health and Sustainability – A Global Data Analysis; available at <https://www.healthforanimals.org/reports/animal-health-and-sustainability/>



concluded that, while changes in consumption of red meat could potentially reduce emissions from livestock by up to 4%, a combination of improved animal health, breeding and feed management has the potential to reduce livestock emissions by up to 55%.

The UNFAO launched a landmark report in 2022, *The Role of Animal Health in National Climate Commitments*, that provided a blueprint for nations to better leverage the transformative value of animal health in climate strategies. The report found that improved animal health should be one of the key action points to reduce GHG emissions, yet “livestock, with only 2% of climate finance received, has been one of the least financed sub-sectors.”<sup>7</sup>

The Government has an opportunity to change this dynamic in Australia. Investments in animal health not only support more productive livestock systems, but also result in lower emissions and superior animal welfare outcomes, all while meeting increasing demands for animal-sourced foods for growing populations. This investment would offer a pathway for strengthening the sustainability of livestock farming while meeting global climate commitments.

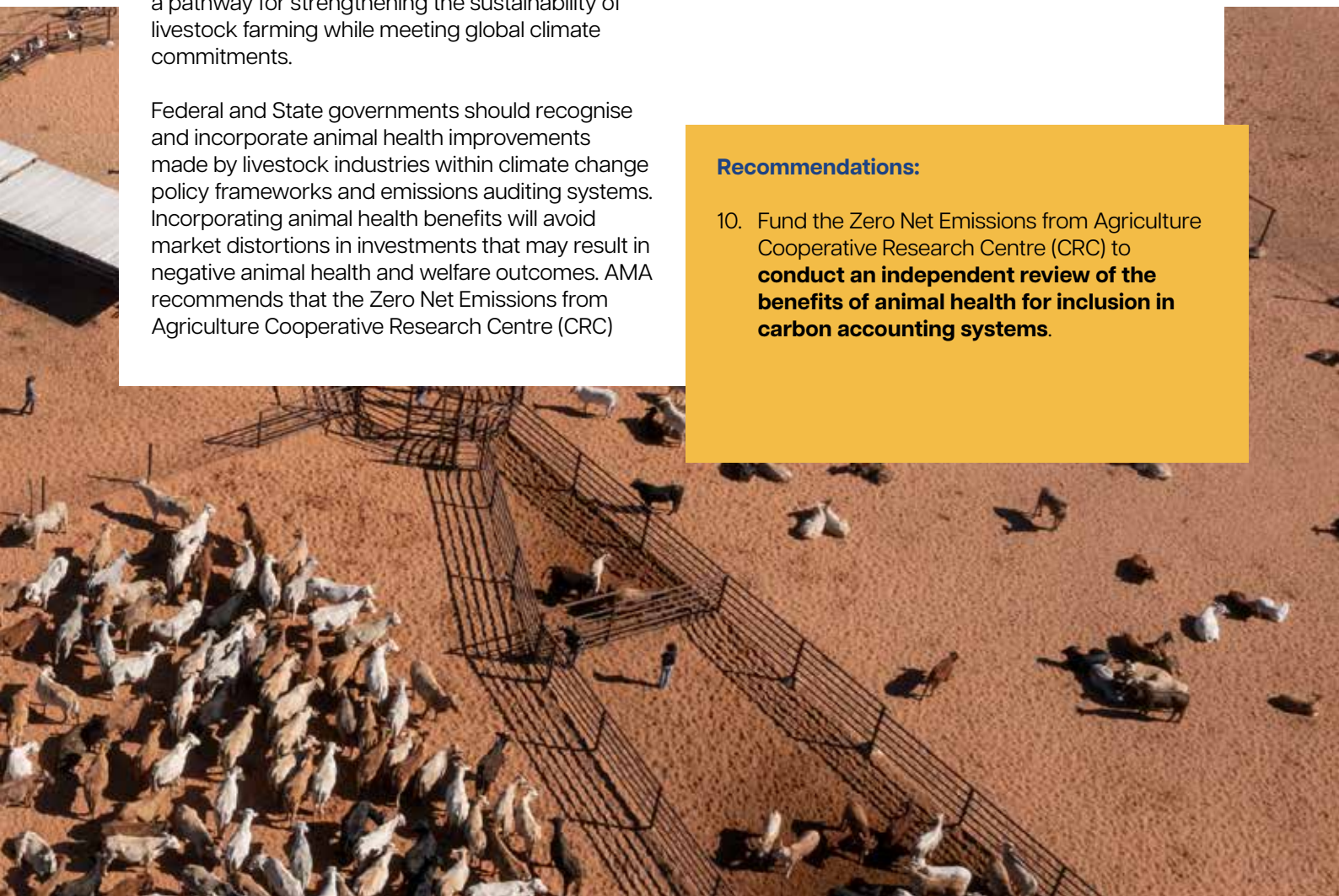
Federal and State governments should recognise and incorporate animal health improvements made by livestock industries within climate change policy frameworks and emissions auditing systems. Incorporating animal health benefits will avoid market distortions in investments that may result in negative animal health and welfare outcomes. AMA recommends that the Zero Net Emissions from Agriculture Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

conduct an independent review of the benefits of animal health for inclusion in carbon accounting systems, to recognise the role that better animal health has in achieving productivity gains, improving the sustainability of livestock production, meeting government climate-change targets (e.g. emissions reductions targets) and managing climate risks.

Regulatory frameworks for animal health products should be streamlined to accommodate legitimate, science-and evidence-based climate-related product claims. These should be regulated consistent with other frameworks dedicated to environmental sustainability product claims and comply with Australian Consumer Law (e.g. misleading or deceptive conduct provisions). While this would not be regulated by the APVMA (as there is no animal health claim), the APVMA must recognise these label statements and the authority of any regulatory or stewardship program that oversees their implementation.

#### Recommendations:

10. Fund the Zero Net Emissions from Agriculture Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) to **conduct an independent review of the benefits of animal health for inclusion in carbon accounting systems.**



<sup>6</sup> UNFAO: Pathways towards lower emissions; available at <https://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cc9029en>.

<sup>7</sup> UNFAO: The role of animal health in national climate commitments; available at <https://www.fao.org/3/cc0431en/cc0431en.pdf>



Our pets form an important component of most Australians' lives, whether for companionship, assistance, teaching care and responsibility, or for physical and mental health benefits.

An estimated 30.4 million pets reside in around 6.9 million Australian households. Pet ownership reached new heights with work-from-home requirements imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic, new pressures and challenges are placing considerable stress on pet owners, such as natural disasters, increasing living costs, inflation and access to housing. This can lead to difficult decisions to find alternate care arrangements for a beloved pet and rising rates of pet surrender are apparent.

To ensure that as many Australians as possible can access the myriad benefits associated with pet ownership and to help keep pet owners with their animals through difficult times, AMA seeks a policy environment that facilitates responsible pet ownership practices. This could be achieved through greater national consistency in companion animal policy settings.

Companion animal ownership, breeding, licensing and welfare is currently controlled by various state and local governments, with limited Commonwealth government involvement or control. Varied existing regulatory frameworks result in a multiplicity of regulatory requirements and restrictions for pet owners and delivers outcomes that may not support responsible pet ownership, including poorer animal health and welfare outcomes.

A National Companion Animal Policy Framework would ensure that the same standards apply irrespective of jurisdiction and that "all animals are treated identically in law". Nationally consistent companion animal policies would provide clarity for governments, better informed policy making and increase regulatory efficiency regarding companion animal ownership, breeding and welfare, as well as provide opportunities for targeted investments in infrastructure based on knowledge of pet populations.

For governments, consistent policy and regulatory settings would assist in achieving policy outcomes, especially in biosecurity, animal welfare and consumer protection imperatives.

Nationally consistent companion animal policies would provide greater confidence for pet owners that they were supporting responsible breeding and welfare practices, and increase the likelihood of a pet being returned to them if it is lost or stolen. Nationally consistent standards, codes and regulatory requirements for supporting industries, such as grooming and kennelling, would also facilitate and support the generation of new qualifications, training programmes and accreditation frameworks.

#### Recommendations:

11. Invest \$8 million over 5 years towards establishing a coordinating committee comprising government, industry and community representatives to develop and **implement a National Companion Animal Policy**.
12. Invest \$5 million towards **supporting the establishment and recognition of new qualifications, training programmes and accreditation frameworks** that directly contribute to improved pet health and welfare.

**An estimated 30.4 million  
pets reside in around  
6.9 million Australian  
households**



**For governments, consistent policy and regulatory settings would assist  
in achieving policy outcomes, especially in biosecurity, animal welfare and  
consumer protection imperatives**



A changing climate and significant global social and economic challenges have changed the way people, animals and our environment interact over the past decade. **One Health** is a governing set of principles that recognises that the health of humans, animals and our shared environments are intrinsically linked. Understanding and embracing these connections is critical to ensuring a sustainable and resilient future for Australia. AMA seeks to ensure that the importance of animal health is recognised in all national priorities and strategies, including Australia's approach to public health, pandemic preparedness and net zero plan.

Through implementation of One Health surveillance, diagnostic and preventative human and animal health care systems, Australia's human health, veterinary and agriculture sectors can ensure that Australia is able to prepare for and respond to zoonotic diseases. 60% of infectious diseases are zoonotic – that is, they can be transferred from animals to people, and from people to animals.<sup>8</sup> The most effective preventive health approach to zoonotic diseases is to keep animals healthy – healthy animals are much less likely to carry infections that could potentially be transmitted to people. Vaccination, parasite control, rigorous biosecurity processes, point-of-care diagnostic technologies and other animal disease prevention tools are at the forefront of zoonoses prevention.

Changing environmental conditions will alter the

distribution and behaviour of many animal and insect species, in turn leading to changing distributions of vector-borne diseases. Flies, ticks, mosquitoes and rodents are common disease vectors that can quickly spread into new areas in favourable environmental conditions where they have not been previously detected or routinely looked for, and where the animal and human population may be immunologically naïve.

The continued spread of H5N1 High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza (HPAI) through domestic poultry and wild bird populations around the world, coupled with the recent transmission from dairy cattle to a worker in the US, demonstrates the importance of recognising the essential and integral role of veterinarians and animal medicines in maintaining and improving public health.

In April 2024, the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) and European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) released a joint report, Drivers and critical steps for an influenza pandemic due to avian influenza. The report recommended enhanced surveillance for H5N1 in animals and humans, as well as strengthening veterinary infrastructure, ensuring access to rapid diagnostics, implementing preventative health measures and, importantly, greater collaboration between animal and human health authorities.

While Australia is currently free from H5N1 and the likelihood of transmission of HPAI from animals to



<sup>8</sup> Global Challenges: Zoonoses. Available at <https://www.healthforanimals.org/global-challenges/zoonoses>



humans is low, recent detections of H7 HPAI on poultry farms in Victoria, NSW and the ACT serve as a reminder that a genuine, collaborative One Health approach to disease preparedness and response is more important than ever.

To operate under a genuine One Health banner, the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) must coordinate activities from all 3 key sectors – human, animal and environmental health – and not simply consider the potential impacts of animal health or the environment on human health. The significant disparity between resources currently provided to the human health sector to manage public health concerns, such as antimicrobial resistance, compared with the lack of resources available to the animal health sector, is currently prohibitive to a genuine One Health approach to managing public health in Australia.

Establishing early and permanent linkages with the broader public health sector in Australia using a genuine and transparent multidisciplinary approach that draws on the knowledge, skills and expertise of people working in a range of fields will deliver the best health outcomes for Australia.

Animal Medicines Australia encourages the Government to ensure that veterinarians and animal health experts are included in this multidisciplinary model, to facilitate a genuine One Health approach to maintaining critical animal health tools and services and providing expert advice during potential zoonotic disease outbreaks. Australia's CSIRO is ideally placed to act as a delivery vehicle to identify priority action areas, bringing together key stakeholders to coordinate a genuine One Health approach to biosecurity and disease preparedness.

Emergency public health and pandemic planning responses must include provisions to maintain essential services such as food production and transport, and essential veterinary care for animal health and welfare, while ensuring the health and safety of farmers, veterinarians, nurses and others involved in animal production and care. Accordingly, the National Medical Stockpile should incorporate animal health care provisions – veterinarians and animal care personnel require rapid access to personal protective equipment, preventative vaccines and freedom of movement to carry out their duties regarding animal health and welfare, as well as providing rapid disease control and containment services, and preventing zoonosis transmission.

### **Antimicrobial resistance surveillance in animals**

The World Health Organisation has described antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as one of the key global health issues that threatens human health and the health of animals within our care. Australia's first **National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015-19** identified the need for a nationally coordinated One Health system for surveillance of organisms resistant to antibiotics. The **One Health Master Action Plan for Australia's National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy to 2020 and Beyond** (OHMAP) was published in 2021 to guide the implementation of the national strategy's key objectives.

The **Animal Sector Antimicrobial Resistance Action Plan 2023 to 2028** provides Australia's animal health and animal industry sectors with agreed priority activities to implement the national strategy, in alignment with the OHMAP. A key objective included in the animal sector action plan is to implement clear governance



processes for AMR initiatives – including by developing a national reporting and surveillance system that meets stakeholder and reporting requirements for the collection and reporting of antimicrobial usage and resistance data in the animal sectors.

Considerable resources have been allocated by the Government to establish a human health AMR surveillance system, but this has not been matched by investment in an animal health equivalent. AMR poses grave threats to animal health and welfare, as well as to human health. This disparity needs to be addressed to ensure that both people and animals continue to have access to these critically important medicines.

Australian livestock producers and veterinarians are acutely aware of the risks of AMR and already implement a range of measures to help reduce their need to use antibiotics, including good animal husbandry, biosecurity and hygiene. Targeted AMR surveillance projects have been undertaken by individual livestock industries and the sector continues to work proactively to respond to the challenges of AMR voluntarily and in the absence of government support.

The available evidence<sup>9</sup> indicates that Australian use of antibiotics in animal health care is conservative, and that AMR rates in animals are low. Further, many antibiotics that are critically important to human health have never been registered for use in animals in Australia. A comprehensive animal AMR surveillance system will provide an independent and clear evidence base to protect both animal and human health, protect Australian trade, enable the best practice use of antibiotics by medical and veterinary professionals, and preserve the utility of these critical medicines for the future.

A One Health AMR surveillance network would require a centralised data storage and collection system for standardised, relevant and comparative data from the agricultural industry. By engaging with all livestock industry groups, it would identify emerging resistance issues in animal populations quickly; quantify if and how antibiotic use in animals may be contributing to human health outcomes and provide important evidence on the low level of antibiotic use and resistance in Australian agriculture to inform important trade markets.

Animal Medicines Australia supports the recently announced United Nations Political Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) and the essential leadership it provides for global action against AMR. AMA recommends the Government works to implement key commitments included in the Declaration, including implementing measures that recognise the need to prevent and control infections in animals, such as:

- Funding the development of an animal vaccination strategy with a defined implementation plan by 2030, and
- 
- Ensure the timely supply of quality and affordable essential veterinary medicines, vaccines and diagnostics, acknowledging the need to improve diagnostic use and increase the number of veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals.

#### Recommendations:

13. **Invest \$6 million per annum for 3 years towards developing and implementing a coordinated approach to biosecurity and pandemic preparedness** by bringing together governments, academia and relevant industries.
14. Invest \$11 million per annum towards **expanding Australia's comprehensive human health AMR surveillance program (AURA) to include animal health.**
15. **Fund the development of an animal vaccination strategy** and defined implementation plan.

<sup>9</sup> O'Neill, J, *Antimicrobials in agriculture and the environment: reducing use and waste*, 2015.



A comprehensive animal AMR surveillance system will provide an independent and clear evidence base to protect both animal and human health, protect Australian trade, enable the best practice use of antibiotics by medical and veterinary professionals, and preserve the utility of these critical medicines for the future.





**Animal  
Medicines**  
Australia

**Animal Medicines Australia Pty Ltd**

18 National Circuit  
Barton ACT 2600  
Australia

**E** [enquiries@animalmedicines.org.au](mailto:enquiries@animalmedicines.org.au)

**T** +61 2 6257 9022

[animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au](http://animalmedicinesaustralia.org.au)



[company/animalmedicinesaustralia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/animalmedicinesaustralia)



[@AnimalMedOz](https://twitter.com/AnimalMedOz)



[@AnimalMedicinesAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/AnimalMedicinesAustralia)