

The Need for a One Health and Welfare Approach to Animal Welfare in Industrial Animal Farming

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Abstract : Antibiotic resistance has been identified by the World Health Organisation as a real possibility for the 21st Century. While many factors contribute to this, one of the more significant is industrial animal farming and its effect on the food chain and environment. Livestock consumes a significant portion of antibiotics sold globally, and these are used to make animals grow faster for profit purposes, to prevent illness caused by inhumane living conditions, and to treat disease when it breaks out. Many of these antibiotics provide little benefit to animals, and most are the same as those used by humans - including those deemed critical to human health that should therefore be used sparingly. Antibiotic resistance contributes to growing numbers of illnesses and death in humans, and the excess usage of these medications results in waste that enters the environment and is harmful to many ecological processes. This combination of antimicrobial resistance and environmental degradation furthermore harms the economic well-being and prospects of many. Using an interdisciplinary approach including medical, environmental, economic, and legal studies, the paper evaluates the dynamic between animal welfare and commerce and argues that while animal welfare is not of great concern to many, this approach is ultimately harming human welfare too. It is, however, proposed that both could be addressed under a One Health and Welfare approach, as we cannot continue to ignore the linkages between animals, the environment, and people. The evaluation of industrial animal farming is therefore considered through three aspects - the environmental impact, which is measured by pollution that causes environmental degradation; the human impact, which is measured by the rise of illnesses from pollution and antibiotics resistance; and the economic impact, which is measured through costs to the health care system and the financial implications of industrial farming on the economic well-being of many. These three aspects are considered in light of the Sustainable Development Goals that provide additional tangible metrics to evidence the negative impacts. While the research addresses the welfare of farmed animals, there is potential for these principles to be extrapolated into other contexts, including wildlife and habitat protection. It must be noted that while the question of animal rights in industrial animal farming is acknowledged and of importance, this is a separate matter that is not addressed here.

Keywords : animal and human welfare, industrial animal farming, one health and welfare, sustainable development goals

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