

ONE HEALTH PRESENTS:



Animal Disease and Human Health

BY KATIE BRINKLEY, VMD

Last year, Penn Vet students from the Medical School founded “One Health,” a broad interdisciplinary group comprised of students from both veterinary and human medicine, as well as public health, nursing, law and business schools, dedicated to fostering collaboration and communication on emerging health topics. One Health hosted its first panel last year (October 2, 2008) on antibiotic usage in food animals with a focus on multi-drug resistant pathogens. Information was presented from a spectrum of experts including: The Union of Concerned Scientists, organic food marketers, state epidemiology experts and pharmaceutical company representatives. The major questions that arose from the panel were: Do the antibiotics given to food animals cause “super bugs” that end up in humans? How does this occur? Can animal production systems afford not to use antibiotics if it comes at the cost of decreased animal health, more pathogens in food or less product? Many

of these questions have yet to be thoroughly addressed, even by ongoing studies in antibiotic usage such as those conducted in Danish food animals for the past 10 years. Thus, one benefit of the panel was in alerting all professional students involved in the food animal and human health industries of the potential impacts of antibiotics in food animals.

One Health’s October 2009 panel focused on the implications of pet ownership for immunocompromised patients undergoing chemotherapy, pregnancy or HIV treatments. Should human hospitals provide consulting for immunocompromised patients about zoonotic risk from their pets? Or is it the veterinarian’s responsibility to provide information about pathogen transfer to clients? Without multidisciplinary input, solutions to these problems are often one-sided and incomplete. In particular, the veterinary field has much to offer the ongoing discussion for providing pet therapy while maintaining human health. ■

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