



# The role of the veterinary sector in the COVID-19 pandemic responses

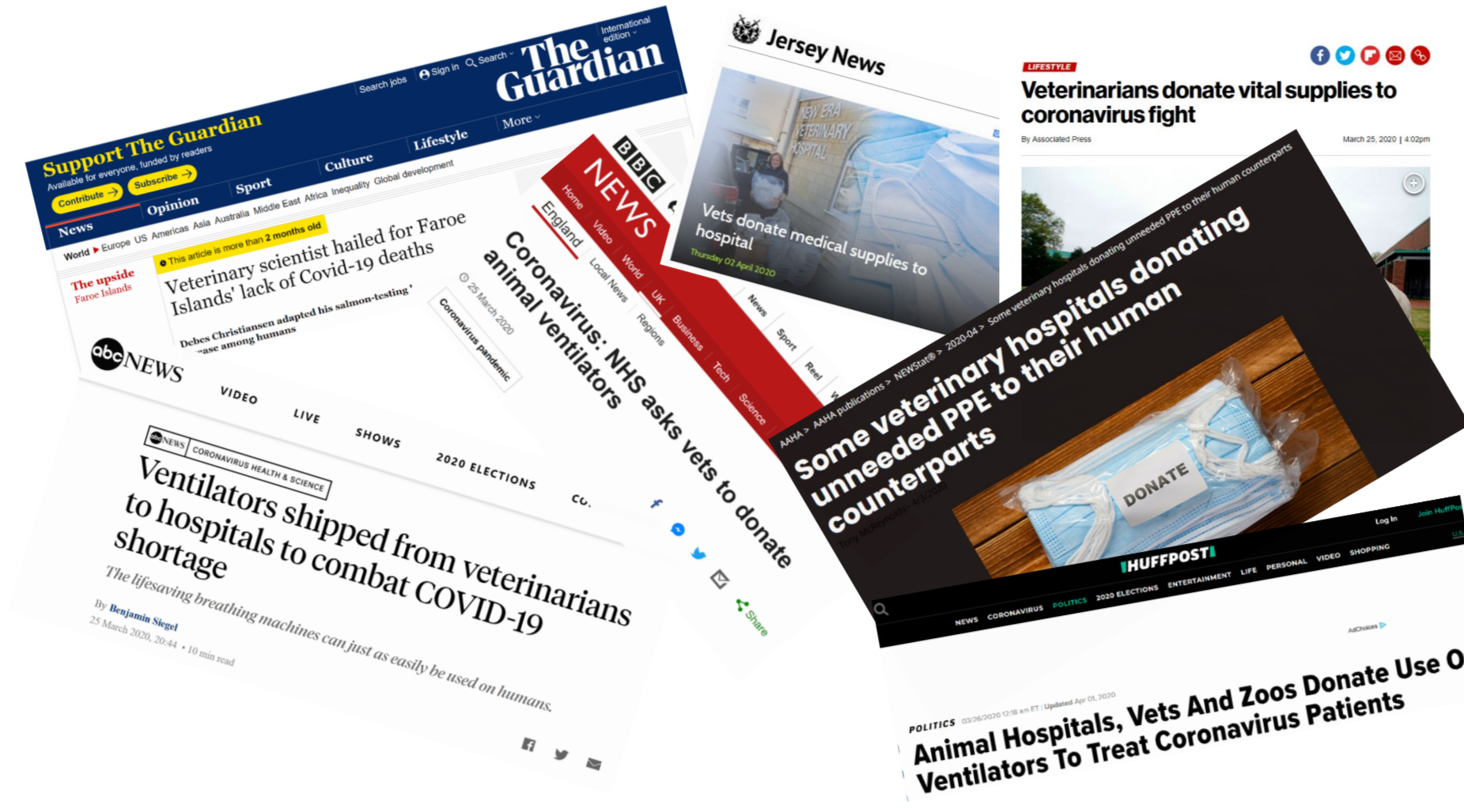


LP Carmo\*, FM Sousa, L Silva, B Friker, C Warembourg, N De Briyne, D Iatridou, P Jokelainen, D Brandespim, D Charypkhan, N Dhand, A Dinis, A El-Tahawy, D Figueroa, F Fasina, J Galhardo, Y Kim, R Laguens, I Lechner, I Magouras, L Maia, D Montano Valle, I Odetokun, D Paiva, C Pettan-Brewer, J Berezowski

\*Norwegian Veterinary Institute, Ås, Norway; Veterinary Public Health Institute, University of Bern, Switzerland. [luis.pedro.carmo@vetinst.no](mailto:luis.pedro.carmo@vetinst.no)

## Why did we start?

- Soon after the emergence of COVID-19, news arose about various contributions of the veterinary sector to the pandemic responses.
- This led us to investigate the full scale of veterinary sector's contributions during pandemic responses.



## What were our goals?

- Document the role of the veterinary sector in COVID-19 responses worldwide.
- Explore the roles and relationships that were formed during the pandemic.
- Identify ways to sustain these relationships and build new ones to deal with future human, animal or One Health crises.

## What did we do?

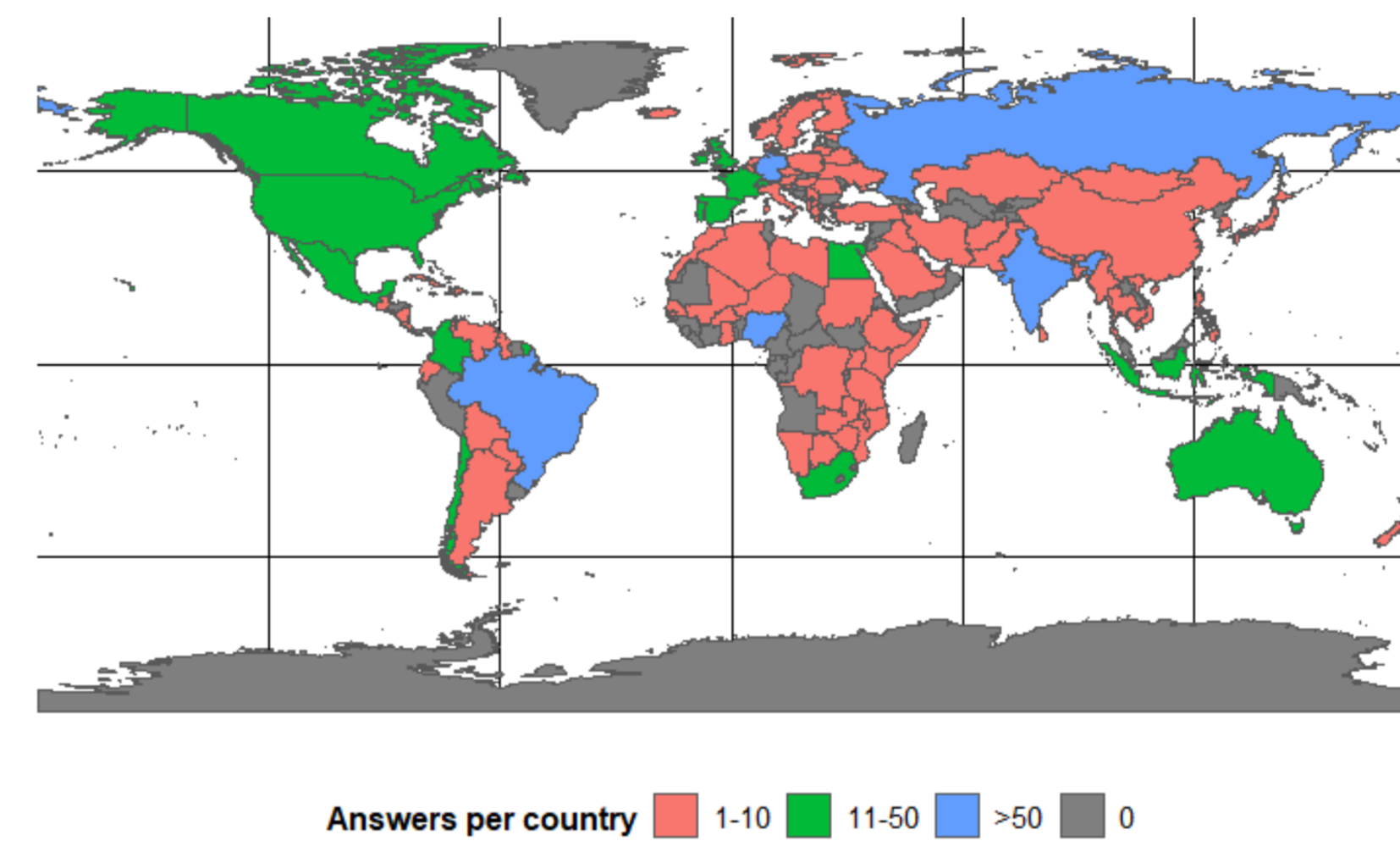
- We prepared a survey in Microsoft Forms and pre-tested it (n = 5).
- The survey was translated into 10 languages.
- Responses were collected from May to July 2020.
- We asked respondents to:

- Name three activities in which the veterinary sector contributed to the COVID-19 pandemic responses;
- Identify ways in which the collaboration between the animal and public health sectors could be improved.

- Data management and descriptive statistics was done in R.
- We used MaxQDA to produce a content analysis of the answers obtained.
- We developed a categorization system *a priori*.
- This categorization evolved during the analysis and was validated by the authors and three experts at the end of the process.

## Who answered the survey?

- We targeted veterinarians, public health experts and researchers or practitioners working within the animal and public health fields. We aimed at having a global overview of the collaborative efforts, rather than being representative at country levels.
- We used mailing lists from veterinary boards, governmental institutions, research networks, national and international organizations to disseminate the survey.



- We obtained answers from 113 countries (n = 1488).
- The majority (71%) of respondents worked in the animal health field.
- Participants from governmental institutions (34%), private industry (32%) and academia (20%) accounted for most responses.

## How did the veterinary sector help in the pandemic responses?

Maintaining animal health and assuring food safety and security during the pandemic; conducting animal health surveillance, outbreak investigations and animal health policy related to COVID-19.

### Animal health action



Testing animals and humans; participating in sampling procedures; development of diagnostics; assessing and validating available tests.

### Diagnostics



Raising public awareness; conducting workforce training, and producing professional and scientific communications.

### Education & communication



Dispensing and lending materials (e.g. PPE, surgical equipment), pharmaceuticals, laboratory reagents and facilities.

### Materials



Providing expertise and contributing to research in many areas (e.g. epidemiology, virology, modelling, risk assessment, surveillance).

### Research & expertise



Providing workforce support (e.g. in clinical or laboratory settings); working in call-centers; contributing to contact tracing and outbreak investigations; helping in risk assessment, surveillance and enforcing control measures.

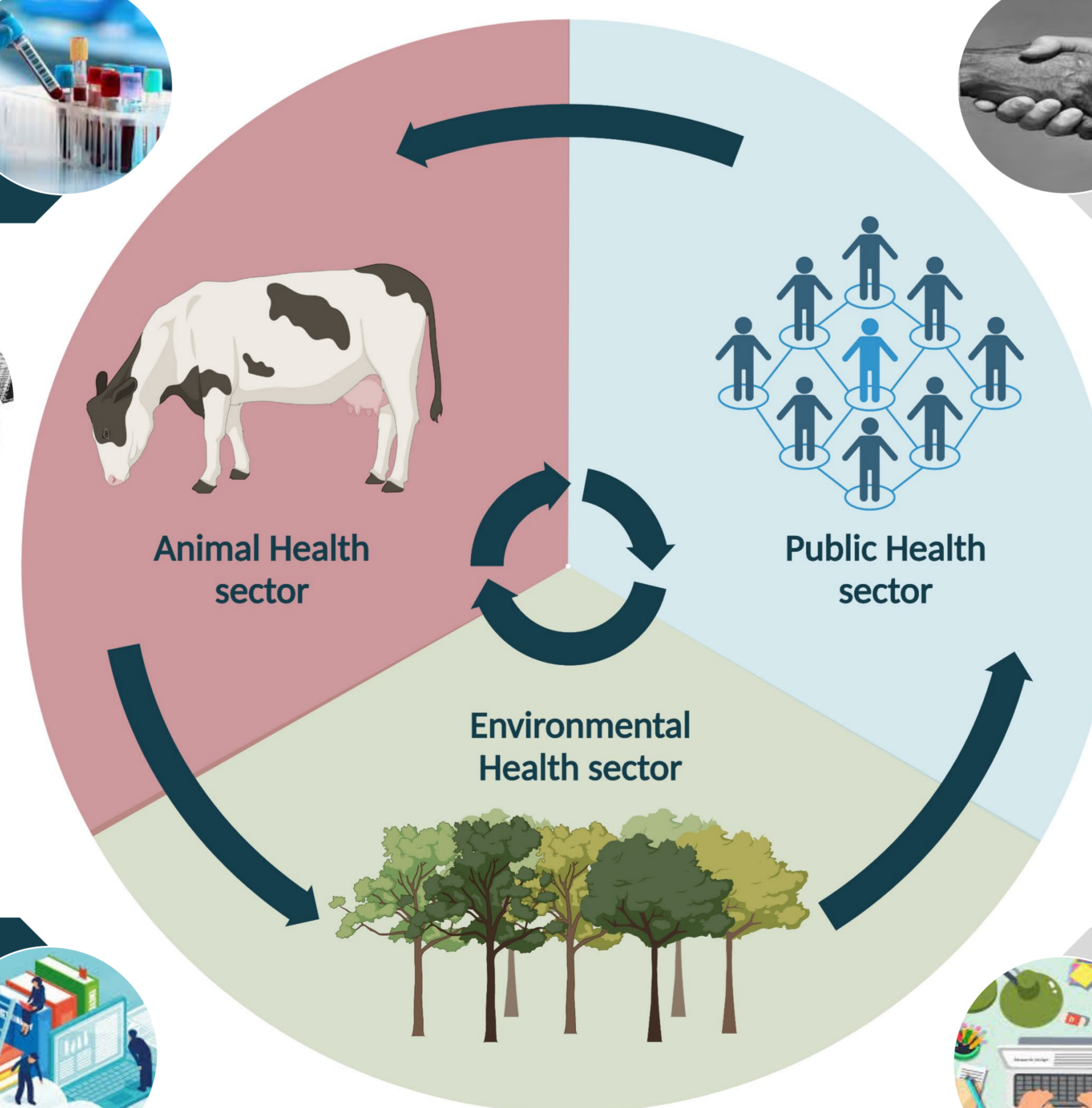
### Public health action



## How can collaboration be strengthened between health sectors?



The One Health approach was advocated as the basis for various activities (e.g. surveillance, emergency preparedness, policy). But, it was often not clear how the concept was understood and how to operationalize it.



### Cross-sectoral networks

Cross-sectoral contacts must be fostered in «peace-time», namely by developing official structures and joint working groups.

### Improved communication

Communication between sectors must be strengthened, including creating official mechanisms for sharing information.

### Education

Awareness about the competencies of various health disciplines should be raised. One Health should be taught in multiple health fields.

### Collaborative research

Funding opportunities for collaborative research should be increased. One Health was suggested as the basis for a common approach to health.

### Emergency preparedness

To be better prepared for future threats, there is a need to actively engage the veterinary sector in emergency preparedness plans and training during «peace time».

## What should you take home from this poster?

- The veterinary sector played an active role on many fronts during pandemic responses, with collaborations emerging at various levels.
- Participants highlighted the need to strengthen collaborations between the animal and public health sectors during «peace time».
- The One Health concept was widely advocated, but a common understanding of what such an approach entails should be sought.