

'To prevent Covid-like outbreaks, India is gearing up to control zoonotic pathogens'

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In the past eight decades, the emergence of zoonotic diseases has increased significantly, raising public health, economic, societal and environmental concerns. This has been exacerbated by the emergence of zoonotic pathogen like SARS-CoV-2 in human beings, which resulted in Covid.

According to *The Lancet*, over 70 per cent of zoonotic diseases originated from wildlife. These include HIV/AIDS, the Ebola virus, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). In an exclusive interaction with *BusinessLine*, Atul Chaturvedi, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, explains the implications of outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, and how India is gearing up to deal with such outbreaks. Excerpts:

Covid proved the devastating impact zoonotic diseases can have on human beings. How can India address future zoonotic outbreaks?

The Covid pandemic has demonstrated the devastating impact that a disease outbreak can have on human life. This has served as an indicator for us to accelerate efforts and implement the One Health framework. Implementation of One Health will allow tracking and

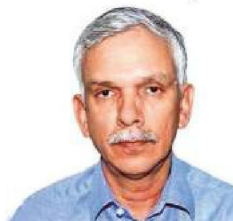
resolving challenges of animal and human health that prevent possible infections and disease outbreaks. The One Health approach will help in forewarning, prevention, early detection, and control of public health emergencies and mitigate endemic zoonotic outbreaks.

To lead the One Health initiative, The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is focussing on interventions that resolve challenges of veterinary manpower shortages, limitations of diagnostic services and epidemiological support, lack of information sharing between stakeholders and institutions, and inadequate coordination on food safety at slaughter, distribution and retail facilities.

What is the 'One Health concept'?

'One Health' is an approach that recognises that animal health, human health, and environment are inextricably connected. Two-thirds of the infectious diseases affecting humans originate from animals. Most of the public health emergencies of international concern during the current millennium had wildlife as their origin.

In the past we have seen disease outbreaks that have had major implications on the so-



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cial and economic landscape of the nation. These outbreaks have been witnessed with the emergence of new infections, re-emergence of existing diseases that are often neglected, detection of antimicrobial resistance at human-animal-environment interface, and influence of climate change on vector-borne diseases and vector epidemiology.

Globally, as well as in India, the One Health approach has been recognised and is being implemented to achieve quality human health and development of social and environ-

mental ecosystems.

How does the One Health approach help curtail antimicrobial resistance?

Resistance to common antibiotics can slide the world into pre-antibiotic era. As part of the 'One Health' initiative, we are looking at building good production practices at farm and field level to reduce disease burden and, hence, anti-microbial resistance.

To reduce the incidence of diseases that can be prevented, we are organising vaccination drives in critical areas. Under the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) animals are vaccinated for FMD, PPR and Brucella. As anti-microbial resistance is relevant in several sectors and industries, we are initiating awareness programmes to reach out to the different stakeholders.

As part of the ongoing World Antimicrobial Awareness Week, the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying is organising 'Anti-Microbial Resistance National Action Plan Stakeholders Workshop' to bring together stakeholders' focus on anti-microbial resistance activities and work towards developing an implementable action plan with a focus on the animal husbandry sector. What will implementation of 'One Health' look like on the ground?