Shayla Helgeson

Iowa Valley Jr-Sr High School

Marengo, IA

Zimbabwe; Animal Health

Making Animal Health a Priority in Zimbabwe

When it comes to agriculture and the agriculture industry, animal and crop health are the main priorities. The main culprit for a bad year of growth or the death of farm animals: diseases. Disease throughout the life of agriculture is present everywhere in the world, but the intensity varies based on a country's prevention capabilities. In developing or undeveloped countries, like Zimbabwe, this is a huge problem. This happens for two reasons: either the disease prevention system in place is unsuccessful, or treating the diseases that are already present is too expensive and not obtainable for those who need it.

Zimbabwe is a unitary presidential republic in southern Africa, where the president serves as both the head of state and government. Agriculture plays a crucial role in the country's economy, with approximately 42% of its land used for agricultural purposes. Zimbabwe's major agricultural exports include tobacco, cotton, sugar, and horticultural products, with tobacco being the leading cash crop and a key contributor to export revenue. The country also produces staple crops such as maize, millet, and sorghum, while its primary livestock includes cattle, goats, and sheep. The average farm size in Zimbabwe varies widely, but many smallholder farms are around 2 to 5 hectares (5 to 12 acres), which is significantly smaller than the average U.S. farm size of about 445 acres. Zimbabwe's geography is mostly high plateau with some mountainous regions in the east and lower-lying areas in the south. The country experiences a subtropical climate moderated by altitude, with a rainy season typically from November to March, which is vital for

crop production. However, droughts are common and continue to challenge food security and farm productivity across the country.

Zimbabwe faces significant challenges with both livestock and crop diseases, which threaten food security, economic stability, and the livelihoods of farmers across the country. Crop diseases such as maize streak virus, gray leaf spot, and various fungal infections reduce yields and make it difficult for farmers to maintain consistent production. Similarly, livestock are vulnerable to a range of illnesses, including foot-and-mouth disease and Newcastle disease in poultry. Limited access to veterinary services, quality medications, and agricultural education makes it harder for farmers to detect and respond to these outbreaks in a timely and effective manner.

One of the most widespread and destructive animal health issues in Zimbabwe is tick-borne diseases. Like the name suggests, tick-borne illnesses are caused by ticks. They normally occur when a tick contracts bacteria, viruses, or parasites from a human being and transfers it to an animal. Now, with this comes great outbursts. The animal will transfer it to another animal or a human and then the cycle continues, causing extreme sickness, the loss of environmental area for the animals of Zimbabwe, and even death. The loss of land correlates to intensified grazing. To compensate for the loss of livestock, farmers will increase herd quantities and graze their cattle more intensely over their land, ultimately the overgrazing depletes the vegetative cover and compacts the soil which is a leading factor to extreme erosion. These diseases are difficult to manage due to a lack of affordable tick control measures like dipping tanks or acaricides that control infestations, especially in rural areas. Humans have the option of wearing long sleeves and pants, using repellent, checking their area, and avoiding tick habitats as ways of preventing tick bites among themselves. But, animals do not have the satisfaction of

getting to put on a coat or grabbing a can of repellent, it is all up to the owners. The spread of tick-borne diseases places an extra financial burden on farmers already struggling with limited resources.

Zimbabwe, being a developing country, has many problems other than animal health. With a population of around 16 million people as of 2019, 39% live beneath the poverty line. That means around 6.1 million people living in the country of Zimbabwe live in poverty. Zimbabwe is an agriculturally based country, the economy is dependent on agriculture much like the people of Zimbabwe. Agriculture is how most citizens make a living. Now, what does this mean? If the people of Zimbabwe consist of mainly agriculturally employed residents, and those residents don't have the money to keep their farms and their animals afloat, Can agriculture be a sustainable livelihood? Veterinary programs to provide assistance in treating and healing the physical well-being of animals are expensive or are not as helpful and intricate as in countries like the United States. While these programs are an option, it does not seem beneficial for those agriculturally based families who don't have the extra money to spend on their animals.

Zimbabwe has solutions to not only prevent diseases in their animals but to decrease the likelihood of infectious diseases spreading throughout their agriculturally based community. In the Animal Health Act established in Zimbabwe, it requires that if a person is the owner of or has current care over an infected animal entering the country, it has to be reported. From there, they can choose to treat the animal or isolate the animal, this rule shows the Zimbabwe's citizens care about their animals health. and made a priority to this agriculturally based community and their government. The problem, enforcement is weak as there isn't a clear way to test and ensure the health of animals entering and living in this country.

The agriculturists of Zimbabwe have made a list of their four highest priorities when it comes to animal welfare. They follow in this order: the inclusion of the welfare of fish in aquaculture regulations, preventing the industrialization of the farming of animals, making the legislation that pertains to animal welfare more of an umbrella, and the expansion of outreach in the terms of plants and plant-based practices. With lower priorities being chicken welfare and the reduction of tick-borne diseases in cattle. Having agriculture priorities that pertain to the underfunded and less prioritized areas of agriculture as well as the needs of the citizens located there, is necessary to make an already agriculturally based community thrive.

While affordability seems to be the biggest problem facing the people of Zimbabwe who need care for sick animals, access is not at any loss. In Zimbabwe, the medical professions in the field of animals and scientific research proposals are not surplus. In Zimbabwe, there are even acts that protect veterinary surgeons, but the guidelines of this act are simply outdated. The Veterinary Surgeons Act was established in 1973 and was meant to professionalize the care and medications that are acted upon animals, with only around 270 trained veterinarians practicing in Zimbabwe. While there is support, it is not even close to enough for the country to thrive without limits.

Affordable care with lack of trained professionals is a lose-lose situation. It is simply a case of supply and demand: where the people in Zimbabwe need care for their animals but have limited options and limited funds. My proposed solution: encourage programs in colleges in the United States and European countries in the direction of veterinary medicine or care. Then take the students who are learning or completed the course to underdeveloped countries like Zimbabwe. This could act as both an internship for students as well as an experience for students to learn and grow, while being a chance for students to explore the parts of the world that need

the help they can devote. Having a study abroad program for students to get hands-on experience and to help those in need would be a great way to improve areas like animal welfare and health in countries that may be struggling in that agricultural category.

In the past, the United States and Zimbabwe have had political disagreements due to different views on human rights and government corruption. Despite these differences, the United States continues to provide aid to Zimbabwe, especially during times of economic hardship and health crises. Because of this ongoing support, it is reasonable to expect that Zimbabwe would accept help from the United States in addressing issues related to animal health. This makes it possible for internships and research programs from American universities to take place in Zimbabwe, as long as they are planned and used appropriately.

Animal health, welfare, and care are focuses of many countries and their agricultural basis, especially in developing or underdeveloped countries, where agriculture-related jobs are the main source of income for many families. Zimbabwe just so happens to be one of those countries that needs the help of other countries to improve the health of their community and their compensation reliance. As a developed and agriculturally based ourselves, we can find a way to do our part in helping countries, like Zimbabwe, our experience and their welfare will all benefit. Agriculturally based communities need to do their part in making our world the agriculturally inclined world that it should be. Whether it be through air quality or animal health, agriculture is the basis of our world. We, as humans, need to do all we can to help these problems.

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