



## BIOTERRORISM

### RESOLUTION

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The World Veterinary Association (WVA) recently issued a statement asking veterinarians worldwide to be vigilant for signs of bioterrorism. The WVA's President emphasised the role of veterinarians in recognising pathogens of danger to humans and the environment, as well as animals, that could be used as bioterrorist weapons.

The WVA also offered to assist international organisations such as WHO, FAO and OIE in the development and implementation of preventative measures and emergency plans, including the surveillance of food, feed and water supplies.

The FVE supports the WVA's request to veterinary surgeons to be aware of the threat. The use of biological warfare agents, as well as deliberately released chemical or radiological agents, should not be totally excluded when making diagnoses, carrying out autopsies or in the inspection of human food of animal origin (as well as the inspection of animal feed). Whilst the use of these agents in Europe remains highly unlikely and whilst at present there is no specific threat, there is nevertheless an increased threat. Veterinarians are well placed to detect the possible use of such agents and increased vigilance by veterinary surgeons at this time can provide a valuable safeguard.

Many potential biological warfare or terrorist weapons are zoonoses and even specifically animal pathogens can be used as such if the aim of their release is restricted to causing major economic damage. A recent example of veterinarians being crucial in the identification of a serious zoonosis – one that was unassociated with any deliberate release – was the diagnosis by a veterinary surgeon in the Bronx zoo in New York City of West Nile Virus.

A final point that FVE would like to emphasise is the importance of veterinarians liaising with relevant agencies and with other professions. All health professionals should exercise increased caution in this area and organisations such as the National and European Food Safety Authorities and Departments of Health also need to be fully conscious of the importance of veterinarians.

#### President

F. Nind

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