ONE HEALTH, ONE WELFARE

by Leandri Strydom

The One Health concept views animal, human, and environmental (or ecological) health as interconnected, and consequently calls for the collaboration of multiple disciplines to work for the optimal health of the environment, the animals, and the people. The One Health concept is a model example of the power of a holistic approach. Farmers play a role both in the health and welfare of the environment, animals, and people.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH
Do we consider both animal welfare, human welfare, and ecological welfare as part of welfare as a whole? While the different aspects of welfare may not always have a direct influence on one another, welfare can still be understood from a holistic viewpoint.

Welfare for animals is described as the five freedoms:
- freedom of hunger and thirst;
- freedom of pain, injury, or disease;
- freedom of discomfort;
- freedom to express normal behaviour; and
- freedom from fear and distress.

Welfare for humans is similar, being defined as the health, happiness, and prosperity of people.

ANIMAL WELFARE AND HEALTH
Animal welfare is a well-known term and concept for dairy farmers. Welfare may often be considered more important for total mixed ration (TMR) systems, as housing plays such a large role in cow comfort and welfare. The dairy parlour is also important for cow welfare and health. Dairy parlour design should allow efficient and timely milking without causing injury or stress to the udder or to the cow as a whole. Dairy parlour design can affect cow health as well as environmental health, since the dairy parlour design should also take safe waste management into account.
Farmers must manage the many welfare and health aspects of animals by creating a comfortable environment for animals and by using vaccinations and medication (especially antibiotics) responsibly. Cow stress plays a significant role in the production and health of cows, so stress alleviation should be high on the priority list. Feed mills and nutritionists play a large role in feed safety and the health of the animals by ensuring optimal nutrition for production and immunity.

**HUMAN WELFARE AND HEALTH**

Human welfare and health affected or influenced by a dairy farm includes that of the farmworkers as well as the end consumers of milk. Farmworkers on a dairy farm often consume unpasteurised milk, which is a potential health risk as the dairy herd could be infected with diseases that can be transmitted via milk. This may be more important for communal systems where milk is typically not pasteurised. Commercial dairy farmers also play a significant role in matters such as antibiotic resistance. Cows should always be treated with antibiotics in a responsible way and according to prescriptions and withdrawal periods.

**ENVIRONMENTAL (ECOLOGICAL) WELFARE AND HEALTH**

Ecological welfare and health incorporate all things that affect the environment and the sustainability of production within that environment, such as waste management and stocking density. This also includes the conservation and managing of water sources in a safe, sustainable, and healthy way. The importance of safe water is emphasised by statistics, as diarrheal disease is the second most common cause of death for children under the age of five globally and is often caused by contaminated water sources.

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