



Working to Achieve Global Equity of Access to Companion Animal Therapeutics

An Advocacy Campaign from the WSAVA



WSAVA
Global Veterinary Community

Why our campaign is important

It is widely accepted that people are happier and healthier in the presence of animals. The growing body of scientific evidence collated by [HABRI](#), confirms a wide range of benefits to human health, including decreased blood pressure, reduced anxiety and enhanced feelings of wellbeing.

The 'human-animal bond' offers benefits to health at every stage of life. In children, 'human-animal interaction (HAI)' has been shown to have a positive influence on physical, social, emotional and cognitive development. It can also benefit children with autism. Early exposure to pets is also believed to be a factor in reducing the development of allergies and asthma.

As we age, the human-animal bond continues to provide important social and emotional support. It can help to reduce distress, loneliness or social isolation, thereby significantly improving overall quality of life. Animal companionship and the increased activity levels it promotes, also contribute positively to physical health, improving cardiovascular fitness and combating obesity.

Given the benefits of animal companionship, it is perhaps not surprising that levels of pet ownership around the world are growing, driven by demographic changes, rising income levels and, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. [HealthforAnimals](#) reports that there are probably already more than a billion pets living with families worldwide. Families in the US, Brazil, EU and China alone account for half a billion dogs and cats.

What is the World Small Animal Veterinary Association?

The [World Small Animal Veterinary Association \(WSAVA\)](#) is a global association of associations. Its members include 115 national and regional small animal veterinary associations. Together, they represent around 200,000 individual companion animal veterinarians and veterinary team members.

The WSAVA works to advance the health and welfare of companion animals and to advocate on behalf of companion animal veterinarians and the wider veterinary team. It does this through:

- Setting global standards for companion animal veterinary practice
- Offering personal and professional development to the companion animal veterinary team
- Campaigning for change to improve the health and wellbeing of the veterinary team and companion animals
- Strengthening and supporting its community of veterinary professionals.

A cornerstone of the WSAVA's work is the creation of its Global Guidelines for key areas of veterinary care, such as nutrition, pain management and vaccination. These set minimum standards of care and recommend best practice, providing clinicians with clear diagnostic and treatment guidelines, wherever in the world they are working.

The WSAVA is proud to work in close partnership with a wide range of veterinary and animal health stakeholders in pursuance of its goals. These partners include the World Organisation for Animal Health, the World Veterinary Association, HealthforAnimals, the Federation of European Companion Animal Veterinary Associations, the Federation of Asian Small Animal Veterinary Associations and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control.



Two urgent challenges we must resolve

Veterinarians rely on nutritional, chemical, pharmaceutical and biological products to enable them to prevent, diagnose and treat illness and disease in companion animals. While they may vary in incidence, these conditions are global in scope and benefit from a common approach to their diagnosis and management.

The WSAVA's Global Guidelines promote high standards of care, recommending the appropriate use of these products. However, thousands of our members experience frustration daily as they try to offer their patients optimal treatment. This frustration is caused by two key problems. If they are left unresolved, millions of companion animals will continue to suffer unnecessarily and the likelihood of negative impacts on human health will increase as more of us share our living spaces with our animal companions.

Challenge 1: The lack of access to appropriate veterinary medicines in many parts of the world

A [2016 survey of WSAVA members](#), primarily those working in countries in which companion animal practice is still developing, revealed that 75% faced obstacles in accessing even some essential medicines. 20% of these further reported that this issue severely affected their ability to provide optimal care to their patients.

A [more recent study](#) presented at the WSAVA World Congress in 2022 explored the global availability of core essential medicines for cats and dogs among 61 WSAVA associate members. The results confirmed a level of variation in core medicine availability that could compromise animal welfare and veterinarians' ability to deliver minimum standards of veterinary practice. For example, opioid analgesics and benzodiazepines were unavailable in many parts of the world.

In addition to compromising animal welfare, the inaccessibility of medicines to veterinarians can also



lead to the creation of black or counterfeit markets and unregulated online pharmacies – a potential threat to both animal and human health.

One of the key obstacles to access to veterinary medicines are the onerous regulatory restrictions in force in many countries. During discussions between WSAVA member associations from Asia at the [Regional Members' Forum](#) in Bangkok, Thailand, in June 2022, all twelve member countries cited problems with regulation as a key factor in limiting their members' access to even basic medicines. Similar problems were flagged in many Latin American countries during the 'Shaping the Future' session and subsequent stakeholder meeting that took place during WSAVA World Congress in Lima, Peru in October 2022.

The need for practical solutions to this problem is also confirmed in the [2020 ASEAN Animal Health Regulatory Benchmarking Survey](#), which highlights that opportunities for harmonization exist, including the greater use of digital tools and e-dossiers.

Challenge 2: The inappropriate use of antimicrobials, which contributes to the selection and spread of antimicrobial resistance (AMR)

AMR is an emerging problem in companion animal veterinary practice because of the increasing frequency of difficult-to-treat infections and the potential for resistant bacteria being transmitted from companion animals to owners and veterinary staff.

The magnitude of the problem is still poorly understood, mainly because of the lack of surveillance systems for monitoring AMR and antimicrobial use in companion animals. However, companion animal practitioners are not exempt from the increasing societal pressure to reduce antimicrobial use. In addition to an overall reduction of antimicrobial use, a specific reduction is expected in the use of drugs which are judged as high priority in human medicine. These include extended-spectrum cephalosporins and fluoroquinolones,

which are widely used in companion animals and, in some situations, may be of critical importance for animal health.

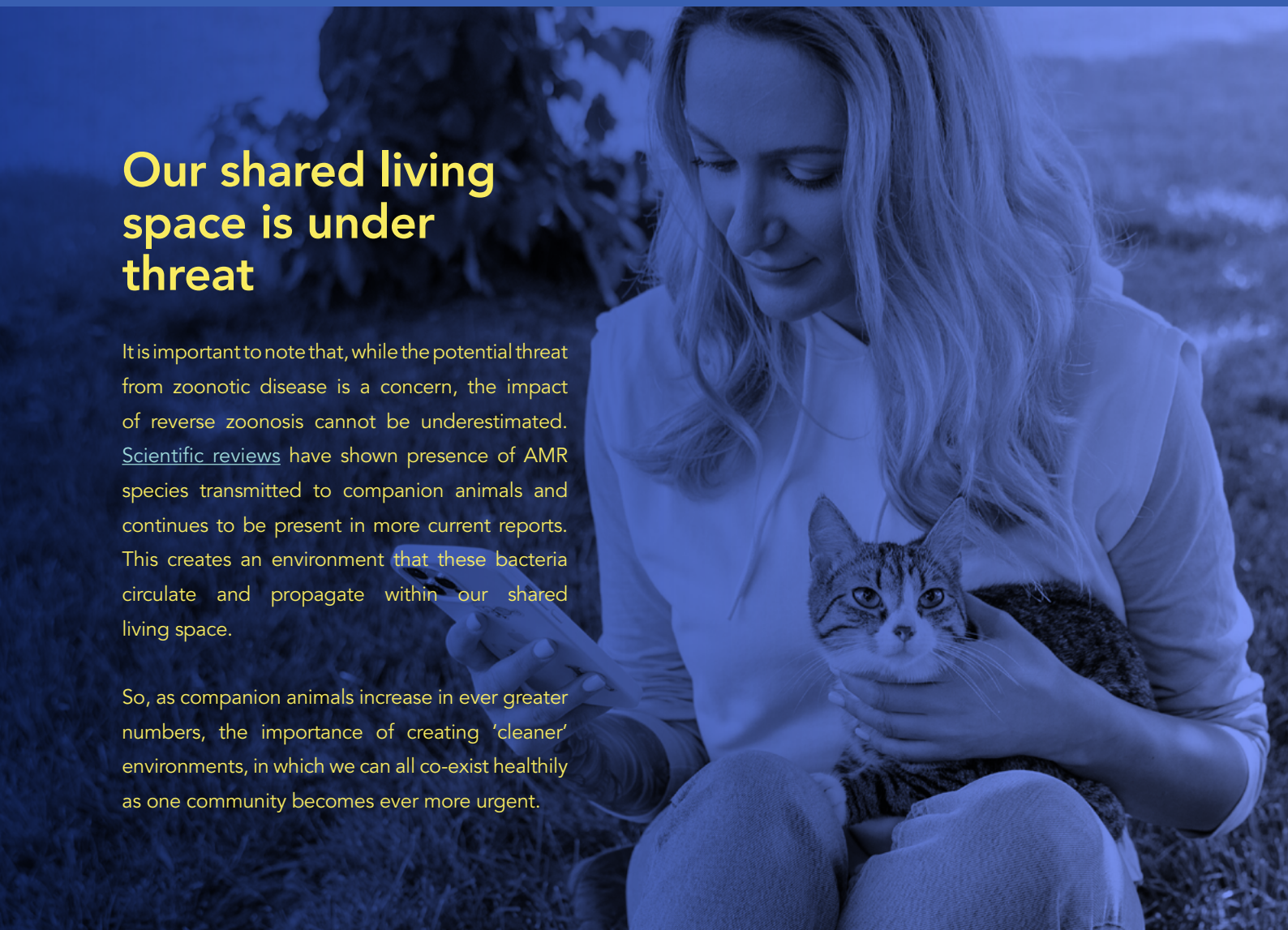
International antimicrobial use guidelines have been developed for common disease conditions, but they are not effectively implemented on a global scale because of geographical, cultural, economic and language barriers. Tools that provide guidance and facilitate understanding of the existing guidelines are needed for a more effective implementation of antimicrobial stewardship in day-to-day clinical practice.

A further concern is the increasing supply of substandard formulations of antimicrobials. The WSAVA recently undertook a [study](#) into the quality of veterinary oral formulations of amoxicillin/clavulanic acid (AMC) – the most commonly used oral antimicrobial drug in companion animals. The results showed evidence of substandard formulations in both developed and developing countries, especially for clavulanic acid.

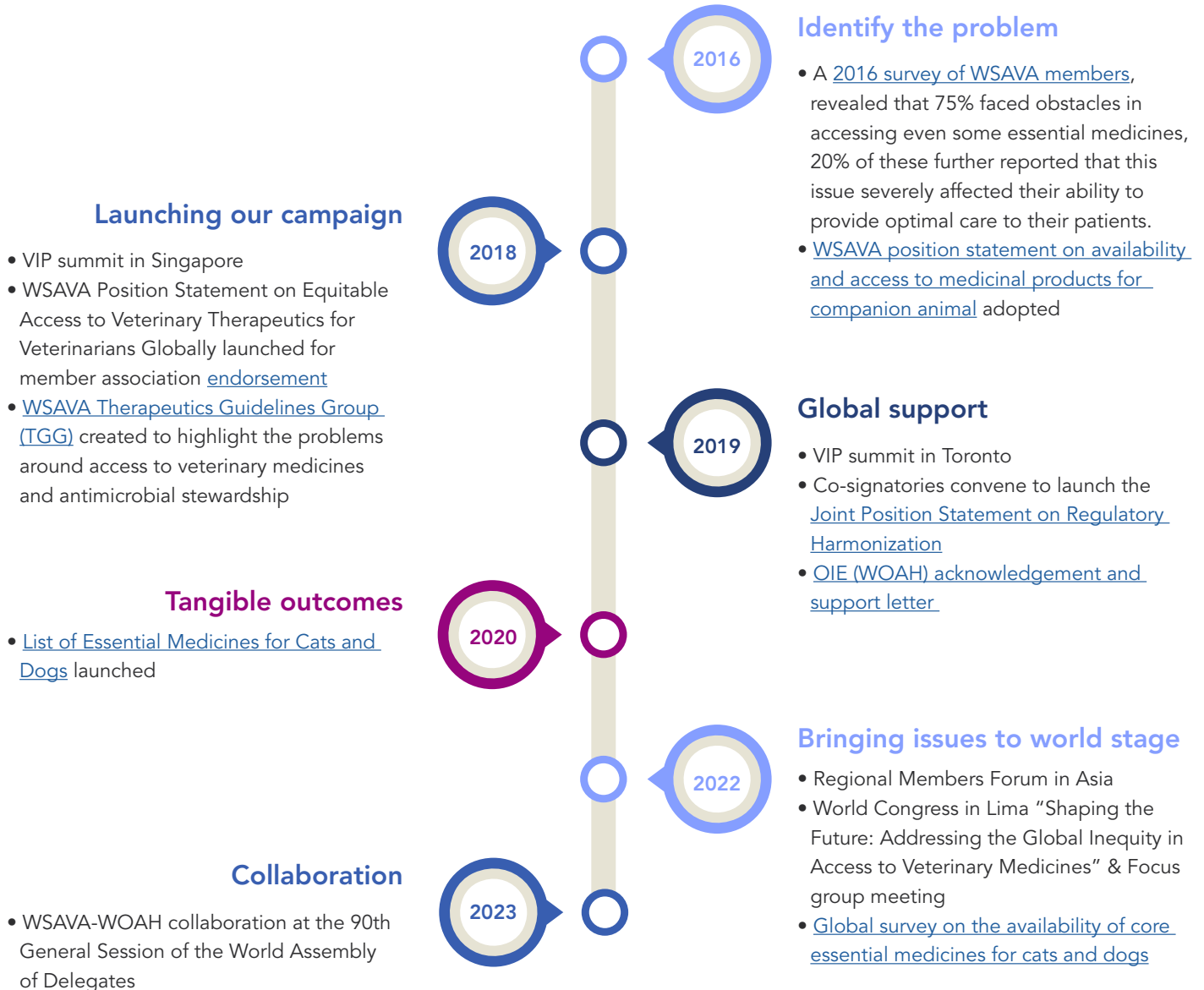
Our shared living space is under threat

It is important to note that, while the potential threat from zoonotic disease is a concern, the impact of reverse zoonosis cannot be underestimated. [Scientific reviews](#) have shown presence of AMR species transmitted to companion animals and continues to be present in more current reports. This creates an environment that these bacteria circulate and propagate within our shared living space.

So, as companion animals increase in ever greater numbers, the importance of creating 'cleaner' environments, in which we can all co-exist healthily as one community becomes ever more urgent.



The WSAVA's response



From the 2018 WSAVA Position Statement on Equitable Access to Veterinary Therapeutics for Veterinarians Globally

"Ready access by healthcare professionals to pharmaceuticals (e.g., medicines, anesthetics/analgesics, etc), biologicals (e.g., vaccines, etc), parasiticides, and antiseptics is one of the key pillars of appropriate patient care, whether in human or veterinary medicine. Inequities in availability and access exist between various regions of the world for a variety of reasons. We call upon key stakeholders (regulatory authorities, manufacturers, and healthcare professionals) to seek solutions that would broaden access while maintaining the sanctity of the veterinary-client-patient +/- pharmacist relationship, where warranted."

From the 2019 Joint Position Statement on Regulatory Harmonization

"There are recognized regional inequities in the availability of veterinary medicines for both companion and food production animals globally, and this results in differing abilities of the animal health sector to provide appropriate animal care – both preventatively and therapeutically – and negatively impacts on animal welfare. While this is a multifactorial issue, at the root of availability of licensed veterinary medicines is the regulatory approval process that grants a product market access. Regardless of region and/or country, the regulatory approval processes all have similar outcomes objectives – ensuring the availability of safe, effective veterinary medicines of high and consistent quality."

We now seek *your urgent attention and support*

The WSAVA is campaigning to bring about change which will benefit both companion animals and companion animal veterinary professionals but which could also offer far-reaching benefits to human health and wellbeing.

We ask for your support to help us:

- Accelerate the creation of a practical regulatory process for veterinary medicines
- Disseminate WSAVA-recommended Global Guidelines for improved companion animal care
- Ensure that the distinction is made between food production animals and companion animals at a regulatory and legislative level
- Highlight the link between companion animal welfare and human health and wellbeing.

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