

Interview with the President of the World Veterinary Association



John de Jong

For this interview, Dr. John de Jong, the President of the World Veterinary Association (WVA), shares his perspectives on his global health leadership, the future of veterinary medicine, existing challenges in veterinary medical education, and key priorities for WVA and World Medical Association (WMA) members, with Dr. Helena Chapman, the WMJ Editor in Chief.

Over the past two years, what do you consider to be your most important leadership achievements as WVA president (2024-2026)?

As I look back on my two-year term as WVA president, I am most proud of several achievements. First, I believe that my energy, enthusiasm, passion, and pride for my profession have allowed me to promote and advocate for greater international visibility of veterinary medicine. In addition, my attendance and proactive participation in various international organizational events, such as the WMA, World Health Organization (WHO), World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), United Nations, and the World Health Summit, has

provided me with unique opportunities to strengthen the visibility, credibility, and recognition of the WVA. I am also pleased to have attended and shared videos to our member organisations to affirm that they are seen, heard, and appreciated.

During my tenure, the following contributions stand out as key highlights and honors. First, I served as an invited speaker at the UN General Assembly in May, and again in September 2024, representing the veterinary viewpoint and role in addressing antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in preparation for the political declaration at the High-Level Meeting on AMR [1] (Photo 1). Next, when *Time Magazine* published its inaugural issue recognising the 100 Most Influential People in Health in

May 2024, I was shocked and disappointed that no person representing animal health or veterinary medicine was included [2]. This observation prompted me to communicate with *Time Magazine* and request that they rethink the scope of their recognition with veterinary medicine as an essential part of health. Fortunately, two prominent leaders in animal health were recognised on this prestigious list in 2025.

Third, I suggested to the WMA that the WMA and WVA update, refresh, and renew our MOU, encouraging us to work more closely together. I am pleased to see that come to fruition when we signed it in July 2025, reinforcing our respective organisations shared commitment to One Health [3]. Fourth, I was an invited keynote speaker on One Health at the 5th One Health International Forum in Fukuoka in February 2025 (Fukuoka, Japan), the International Veterinary Students' Association (IVSA) General Assembly in August 2025 (Taipei, Taiwan), the WMA General Assembly in October 2025 (Porto, Portugal), and the FedMVZ National Convention in January 2026 (Monterrey, Mexico) (Photos 2-3). I have worked hard at strengthening the WVA relationship with the IVSA and obtained a financial award (5,000 Euros) as my President's Award, enabling them to do much more to build their organisation. After all, our veterinary students are the future of the profession. Finally, I have led and contributed to advancing and securing unprecedented sponsorship levels for the WVA, as well as attracting new member organisations and elevating the WVA's global



Photo 1. Dr. John de Jong highlighted WVA's long standing commitment to combat AMR globally at the multistakeholder hearing at the United Nations on Antimicrobial Resistance in May 2024. Credit: John de Jong

World Medical Journal



reputation.

Aside from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, how would you describe the anticipated challenges in veterinary medical education over the next decade across the globe?

While I am not formally an educator in the academic realm, I am fully aware of the various challenges facing veterinary medicine, including those related to the education of future veterinarians. Graduating veterinarians will need to be more cognizant and deeply engaged in One Health to address the increased burden of zoonotic and emerging diseases, as well as the challenges of antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Veterinarians must navigate a rapidly changing world (including the use of artificial intelligence), ensuring adequate numbers of professionals to fill diverse roles and inspiring students and early-career professionals to enter clinical practice and also serve in other areas such as public

health, epidemiology, food production, research, and beyond. We must preserve the broad base of general knowledge historically provided to graduating veterinarians, encouraging early-career veterinarians to avoid becoming overly specialised.

How do you envision the future of veterinary medicine as it relates to academic training and clinical practice?

The future of veterinary medicine shines bright, as many unexplored opportunities lie ahead (Photo 4). Highly relevant academic training must remain linked to clinical practice so that educators can effectively educate and train future veterinarians for their roles and meet employer needs. Clinicians must continue to play a key role in training veterinarians because not all aspects of the profession are purely academic. Veterinary medicine must attract and train young talent with excellent basic skills, including communication and common sense, while upholding

rigorous standards that welcome only the best and brightest into the profession.



Photo 3. Dr. Ashok Philip (WMA President 2024-2025) (left) and Dr. John de Jong (right) at the WMA General Assembly (Porto, Portugal) in October 2025. Credit: WMA

How can veterinarians lead efforts to effectively use next-gen technologies, including artificial intelligence, in the clinical workplace?

The most effective way to achieve these efforts is by ensuring that veterinarians are present and engaged at the table. As veterinarians, we must use our intellectual capacities to shape the evolution of these technologies as well as actively contribute to their creation, utilising our unique knowledge and creativity.

What three approaches can build and strengthen One Health collaborations between veterinary and human medical teams?

Building and strengthening One Health collaborations require a multi-faceted approach. First, organisations at the international, national, regional, and local levels



Photo 2. Dr. John de Jong (right) presented Dr. Felix Metzger (IVSA President) (left) with the WVA President's Award at the 74th IVSA Congress General Assembly (Taipei, Taiwan) in August 2025. Credit: John de Jong

must coordinate and collaborate effectively. Second, veterinary and human medical schools must educate their students on One Health, with professionals from each discipline serving as guest lecturers at each other's institutions promoting the benefits and real-world applications of One Health. Finally, educating the public (including starting with primary education) about how human health, animal health, and environmental health are all inextricably intertwined for sustainable health on Earth is necessary. Veterinary and human medical teams should always remember and emphasise that environmental health forms an essential part of this triad.

As WVA president, what are the four key priorities that the WVA and WMA members should address in the next five years?

First, sustained active leadership dialogue between the WVA and the WMA can accelerate the execution of the plans outlined in the updated MOU [3]. We cannot just 'talk the talk,' as we must also 'walk the walk.' Second, both organisations can coordinate a second joint Global Conference on One Health, as the first conference was organised in May 2015. This can lead to a biennial event attracting global leaders from both professions and key environmental health stakeholders

[4]. Third, and perhaps most important, the WVA and the WMA can communicate with member organisations about the importance of One Health, including its education and implementation at the national levels. Finally, both organisations should commit to collaborating in educating governments and regulatory bodies, helping them to understand and adopt the One Health approach for the benefit of all.



Photo 4. Dr. John de Jong in his office with his dog, Radar.
Credit: John de Jong

References

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