

## Renewed Ethos for the One Health Movement: A Book Review



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The national and international One Health movement has expanded substantially over the past two centuries, where four key figures (two physicians and two veterinarians) led the transformation of the perceived interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. Initially recognised as the One Medicine concept, Rudolf Virchow (physician)

demonstrated the value of integrating medical and veterinary sciences in the 19th century. Building on these findings, William Osler (physician), James Harlan Steele (veterinarian), and Calvin Schwabe (veterinarian) advanced the One Medicine foundation to the modern One Health concept. Nowadays, the One Health High-Level Expert Panel, an advisory

group to the Quadripartite organizations (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, FAO; United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP; World Health Organization, WHO; World Organisation for Animal Health, WOAH) has further refined the One Health definition, incorporated the 4 C's (communication, coordination, collaboration, capacity building), and developed an operational guide to support the implementation of the *One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022-2026)* [1,2].

Established in 2006, the One Health Initiative (OHI) (<https://onehealthinitiative.com/>) has played a fundamental role in engaging diverse stakeholders in the One Health movement, supporting a wide range of professional and occupational initiatives worldwide. Together with the One Health Commission and the Global One Health Community (formerly, One Health Platform), the three groups have supported One Health Day celebrated annually on 3 November (<https://www.onehealthday.com/>). Notably, the OHI autonomous pro bono team contributed an interview and prepared a historical review of the One Health movement, describing primary leaders in human, animal, and environmental health from the 1880s to present day [3,4]. In this article, the OHI team synthesises key highlights and offers analytical perspectives on a timely One Health publication for the global community, as an opportunity to help catalyse collective dialogue on ethical approaches to the practical implementation of the One Health concept.

## Discovering the One Health Roadmap

As emerging global challenges grow more complex and interconnected, understanding the scientific, social, and ethical dimensions will be essential for effective preparedness and response by leaders and community members alike. The *Ethics for One Health Approaches: A Roadmap for Future Directions* book, published by Henrik Lerner in 2025, marks the path for a closer look at the ethos for the One Health movement [5]. The author proposes an accompanied literary journey to review and identify frameworks on strategically solving ethical challenges using the One Health approach.

In the first chapter ("Introduction and Scope of the Book"), Lerner presents an overview of how One Health approaches have evolved since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Rudolf Virchow as the "Father of Modern Pathology"), and underscores the importance of ethical approaches to analyze the utility of these One Health approaches in real-world scenarios using three concrete examples. First, since understanding infectious disease transmission (including bats) can be connected to value systems and knowledge traditions, conflicts between species conservation and disease transmission or prioritising one development goal versus all goals may present. Second, as animal-assisted interventions (including therapy, learning, and coaching) are directly aligned with human health, promoting best hygiene practices may not reduce all potential risks of infectious disease spread (such as antimicrobial resistance). Third, compounding risks of marine ecosystems – such as increasing ocean temperatures (leading to

warming, acidification, and coral reef health) or plastic waste (causing the accumulation of microplastics and increased health risks in humans and animals) – bring non-living elements of ecosystems to the forefront of global dialogue.

In the second chapter ("Values and Scope of One Health Approaches"), the author highlights that the empirical and conceptual groundwork for a unified ethical approach is posed by an examination of central values and definitions of various integrated health frameworks. He discusses key issues for advancing cohesive, practicable One Health ethical principles. The primary focus remains on integrating or amalgamating diverse health standpoints by independently examining the holistic perspectives of One Health, EcoHealth, Planetary Health, and One Welfare. Consequently, this chapter positions the book as a roadmap for future dialogue and research aimed at building a more robust ethical framework for One Health approaches.

## Exploring Ethical Perspectives

In the third chapter ("Ethical Attempts for One Health Approaches"), the author presents proposed ethical frameworks within One Health approaches, disputing some claims that One Health approaches ignore ethics. This chapter points out that when participants address situations requiring multiple disciplines, they must recognize that actions employed within each discipline may reflect distinct ethical viewpoints and norms, which may not always be compatible. The author cites several examples related to animal culling in dealing with disease outbreaks,

noting that domains encompassed by a broad One Health definition – such as Planetary Health and EcoHealth (e.g. biophilia, land ethic) – may be overlooked by biomedical experts. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ethics as the “*principles of conduct governing an individual or a group*” (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ethic>), as a reminder that individual behaviors and activities may vary substantially from our own. The unspoken question, however, remains: *Who holds the responsibility for determining what elements fall within or outside the scope of One Health?*

In the fourth chapter (“Expanding Anthropocentric Ethics”), Lerner evaluates the feasibility of whether or not an anthropocentric, ethics-based framework can meet the needs of the One Health movement. The author examines the pros and cons related to issues of anthropocentric bioethics, principlism, and biophilia. He stresses that a truly effective, ethical framework for One Health must transcend conventional public health concerns, by incorporating moral consideration for ecosystems and recognising the intrinsic value of non-human species beyond human exploitation.

In the fifth chapter (“Animal Ethics, Veterinarian Ethics, and Humans”), the author highlights the burgeoning global curiosity and desire to better understand the vast realm of animal ethics and human-animal interactions and relations. The chapter references decades of work by Martha Nussbaum, who avows that all humans and wild and domesticated animals have a straightforward right to dignity. It also showcases the work by David Fraser and other well-known philosophers on animal

welfare and the ethical treatment of animals. As Lerner’s analysis looks closely at similarities and differences between human and animal species, he examines Nussbaum’s premise that the combined capabilities concept can also apply to animals in various ways. Finally, the author references the four principles of animal ethics, comparing and contrasting Fraser and Fawcett et al. (Anne Fawcett, Siobhan Mullan, and Paul McGreevy) versions, and concludes that all forms of ethical decision-making (principlism) tend to be too narrow in scope and not inclusive enough for One Health approaches.

In the sixth chapter (“Environmental Ethics”), Lerner uses the lens of Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic framework to discuss the importance and the interconnectedness of environmental ethics in the One Health approach. He developed the Lerner’s Land Ethic Decision Model, influenced by the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem (IPBES) that shifted its framework from the Nature’s Contribution to People (NCP) to the Nature Futures Framework (NFF). Through three applications of his decision model, the author examines One Health bioethics, emphasising the effects on the beauty, stability, and integrity of various biotic communities.

In the seventh chapter (“A Need for a Pluralistic Ethics”), the author promotes pluralistic ethics as an inclusive approach that engages multiple perspectives and fosters fair and ethical conclusions through a two-step process. The first stage (“pre-framing”) includes the selection of relevant stakeholders to identify hidden assumptions, acknowledge cultural

differences, select values, and set agendas. The second stage (“ethical dialogue”) brings the first stage results to an open-ended, inclusive discussion with the goal of obtaining feedback and mutual understanding. With the frequent omission of the role of animals and the environment in ethical debates, the author comments on the important inclusion of indigenous people’s belief systems as well as the ethical, cultural, and philosophical views underlying animal rights and the moral position of animals. Ongoing global discourse spotlights One Health priorities in national and international funding, policy development, and capacity building activities.

### **Incorporating Lessons Learned**

In the final chapter (“A Roadmap for Future Directions”), Lerner draws on the analysis developed in the prior chapters that One Health advocates and experts lack a shared definition and ethical integration to address the complex challenges spanning human, animal, and environmental domains. Various One Health initiatives routinely involve selective stakeholders with divergent world views – such as veterinarians, physicians, ecologists, indigenous communities, sociologists, agriculturists, policymakers, and the public – and each group brings their own assumptions about what counts as harm, benefit, responsibility, and justice. Asserting ethical pluralism as a structural requirement for One Health, the author proposes an inclusive, dialogical model to manage diverse values, cultures, and knowledge systems involved in One Health decision-making.

## Conclusion

*The Ethics for One Health Approaches: A Roadmap for Future Directions* book, published by Henrik Lerner, offers a fresh ethical perspective about the human-animal-environment nexus that can broaden the scope and enrich the One Health discourse. The author underscores the analysis that no single ethical framework effectively captures the diverse values and interests involved in addressing complex One Health issues. By supporting the pluralistic two-step dialogue, sharing multidisciplinary and multisectoral perspectives on pressing global health topics – like the triple planetary crisis (climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution) – can lead to developing ethical and cost-effective solutions and sustainable change.

While this book provides a valuable forum for debating ethical perspectives on One Health approaches, the author does not share guidance on resolving conflicts arising from different disciplinary viewpoints. Although conflict resolution extends beyond the scope of this literary work, it remains an essential critique deserving broader attention in One Health discussions. Future trends that highlight One Health ethics worldwide should consider understanding the gap between ethical concepts (e.g., anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, zoocentrism), identifying ethical decision models, and balancing ethical aspects among different species or levels [6]. Furthermore, the author recognizes that future progress for the One Health movement depends on ethical consensus

among diverse global stakeholder communities.

**Note:** The OHI team contends that, *ceteris paribus*, irrefutable evidence underscores the critical need to institutionalize the One Health concept or approach worldwide, as it will “...protect and/or save untold millions of lives in our generation and for those to come.”

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