

CONSERVATION THROUGH POLICY PLANNING

A New Role for Wildlife Health Professionals

In an age when organizations are striving to ensure the health of ecosystems through careful conservation planning, the work of wildlife health professionals could not be more relevant. *Research* on wildlife ecology, animal behavior and disease is simply not enough to secure a future for wild species and wild spaces. Long-term conservation success depends on translating scientific information into action, on a solid foundation of sensible policies.



Bridging the Gap between Research and Conservation Planning

WCS's Field Veterinary Program (FVP) bridges the gap between research and conservation planning. We work at the interface between wildlife health, livestock health, and human health. Utilizing valuable data generated from research, we create best practice manuals, recommend guidelines to governments, and help to develop policy to protect the health of wildlife, domestic animals, and people. As part of a larger project for USAID, for example, we are evaluating how the interactions of wildlife, livestock and humans impact health. The product of this effort will be a set of guidelines for project planning, implementation, and monitoring to ensure safe conservation and development practices.

It is widely known that eagles, falcons, hawks and owls are susceptible to accumulation and bio-magnification of pesticides due to their position at the top of the food chain. This is of particular concern in the agricultural region of the Argentine pampas where many of these migratory birds of prey are frequently exposed to dangerous pesticides. Working with government agencies and non-governmental organizations, the FVP helped create a manual to guide local biologists and veterinarians in monitoring the health of these birds and provided support for changing agricultural practices to reduce pesticide contamination.

For more
information visit
www.fieldvet.org
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The Field Veterinary Program also is uniquely linked with IUCN (the World Conservation Union). This organization, founded in 1948, brings together 112 government agencies, 735 NGOs and over 10,000 scientists to implement conservation and biodiversity strategies. We now have the opportunity to influence policy through a wide range of formal and informal channels. WCS is using its diverse expertise and decades of experience in wildlife health and conservation to design novel strategies to ensure the protection not only of wildlife but also entire ecosystems.