



## **One Health: Connecting Humans, Animals and the Environment**

### Video Transcript

#### **Love, fear, eat – our complicated relationship with animals**

[Jakob Zinsstag]: I like animals very much and enjoy the experience to be in their company. What has always struck me is how contradictory our relationship to animals is. There are those we love, those which provoke anxieties, and those that some of us eat. And all three attitudes are not necessarily logical or everywhere the same.

I am Jakob Zinsstag, I am a veterinary epidemiologist. Together with Esther Schelling and Bassirou Bonfoh, whom you will meet later, I shall introduce you to the principles of One Health.

One Health is a concept that takes into account how humans and animals relate to each other specifically in health care. This course invites you to consider why doctors and veterinarians should work closely together. In other words, we are convinced that the closer cooperation between the health systems for humans and animals would be an added value when we think of global improvement.

Now, the first thing we need to observe is that we differ in our attitudes towards animals, depending on our origin, our beliefs, or personal predilections. And our attitudes towards the different animals are sometimes irrational. It helps to keep this in mind. It helps to retrace one's experiences with animals.

As a boy, I had cats. I loved to play with them, especially with the baby cats. But I also liked the dog we had. The dog loved me. When I sat down, he would put his head on my knee expecting to be stroked. Later, I took him with me when hiking through the Swiss Alps.

As a young lad, I worked a lot on the farms of my mother's family. I helped milking the cows and goats. When my brother became a sheep farmer, I also herded his animals for him. I also assisted when animals were slaughtered. I felt sad when their life was taken away. However, I eat and enjoy meat. Even if I think we should eat it with moderation. Death and killing are also elements forming my experience with animals. When we lived in West Africa, we kept rabbits. One night, a middle sized python strangled one. I killed the python with a gun. I was very much afraid it could strangle one of our then small children who used to play in the garden.

Fear was also an element of the encounter with a poisonous spider. When I opened our laboratory one fine day, a very large tarantula dropped on my hand. Luckily, I was fast enough in removing my hand to prevent its bite.

There are a lot of stories like this. I realise I live in close companionship with some animals, I work with some others, I eat some of them, and I'm afraid or even disgusted by others.

Now think about this. How would you categorise your experience with animals? We look forward to reading your comments!esting and enjoyable.