One Health: Connecting Humans, Animals and the Environment
Video Transcript

A world of difference

[Jakob Zinsstag]: Hello. As part of the One Health course, it's very important that we understand how humans and animals relate together. Today, we would like to discuss this together with two students. This is Daniela Rodriguez from Mexico, and this is Mohammed Ibrahim from Ethiopia. Could you present yourself please, Daniela?

[Daniela Rodriguez]: Thank you, Jakob. Well, as you said, I'm from Mexico, born and raised in Mexico City. And it's a very big city, it's over 20 million inhabitants, it's a very busy place. But currently I'm living in Basel doing my PhD in epidemiology at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. And the project I'm working on it's in malaria control and surveillance in Papua New Guinea. So we are evaluating the impact of malaria intervention towards elimination of malaria in Papua New Guinea.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: Thank you. And you, Mohammed?

[Mohammed Ibrahim]: Well, I'm from Ethiopia, and my background is pastoralist, which mainly depend on livestock. And I used to look after livestock in my childhood like that of my ancestors do. Now I'm here as a student, PhD student in epidemiology in University of Basel at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute. And my research project is on one of the precious and very lovely species in Somali community which is camel. And I will look at the camel zoonosis, and is public health importance in Ethiopia Somali regional state.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: Thank you very much, Mohammed and Daniela. What is interesting, and actually strange, in the human-animal relationship is that we have animals that we like very much, but we have also animals we are afraid of, there are animals we would even eat, there are animals we consider as a nuisance, and there are animals we think they should be better protected. How is this for you Daniela, in Mexico?

[Daniela Rodriguez]: For me? Well animals I like, for example, as companion would be dogs and cats. But I also like wild animals in the ocean, for example, sea turtles. And I also really like these HeroRATs that are giant pouched rats that are used to detect tuberculosis and landmines. Well about animals I'm afraid of, I'm afraid of snakes, in general poisonous animals like scorpions, and I don't like big cats, I am afraid of them, like lions or leopards. Animals I consume I would say I eat beef, pork, and in some parts of Mexico there's people that eat insects like ants or grasshoppers and I also like them. I think that animals that need more protection in general is wildlife in the mainland and in the ocean, but also some farm animals in the industrial meat production and industrial production of eggs.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: Thank you very much, Daniela. How is it for you, Mohammed?

[Mohammed Ibrahim]: Well I like many animals, but the major ones that I like are camel or calves.
The animals that I am afraid of are, for example, crocodiles, snakes, lion, and scorpions. Regarding the animals which I consume are camel, beef, sheep, goat. And animals which need protection, the main ones are the wildlife animals and wild birds in general.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: If you watch our list you see that we agree on some animals, but we have also different views on others. How is your perception of that?

[Daniela Rodriguez]: Well, I think we all like cats and cows, we are afraid of poisonous animals like scorpions or snakes, and we also agree that the wildlife, animals in general, need some protection from humans.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: So Mohammed, we are also diverging in some perceptions of animals.

[Mohammed Ibrahim]: Yeah. With regard to how we value animals, especially dogs and the pigs, differ because of background and because of religious reasons. For example, in my area, we don't keep dogs at home, but in a few rural areas they keep dogs to look after their livestock. But about the pigs, we never keep nor eat the meat from pigs because of religious reasons.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: So you mentioned religious and cultural reasons that determine how you relate to animals. So how is this for you in Mexico, Daniela?

[Daniela Rodriguez]: Well in Mexico, I would say over 80% of the population is Catholic. And that doesn't have a lot of restrictions in our diet, so we would consume beef but also pork, then we also consume a lot of products from the sea. And there are different groups in the country which still practise some pre-Hispanic traditions, and they would add to their diets things like turtle eggs or even iguana. But we are also concerned about these species, as both of them are endangered, then they are protected. So only people in this specific cultural background, and in specific geographical area, could consume this kind of meat, for example.

[Jakob Zinsstag]: Well, in this class we have discussed commonalities, but also differences in how we value animals in the animal-human relationship in general between different cultures. These differences in the human-animal relationship is very important in One Health, and in the next classes you will learn methods how we can assess human and animal health simultaneously, and also its economic, its security value, or also its emotional value. It is thereby very important that we ourselves know our animal-human relationship, we call this a self-reflexive attitude. This helps us to understand how in other cultures the animal-human relationship is perceived in a different way. So we were lucky to have today two students with us from different cultures who helped us to understand this issue. And I thank you very much, Daniela and Mohammed, to have participated in this class. I wish you all the best for your future studies. I look forward to seeing you again. Thank you very much! Thank you.