

Position Description

Public Health Veterinary Consultant

Estimated number of hours per week: 40

The Public Health Veterinarian will serve as a critical liaison between animal, human, and environmental health sectors, providing veterinary expertise to support the Disease Outbreak Control Division (“DOCD”) in advancing One Health initiatives. This role is pivotal in fostering a collaborative approach to health that recognizes the interconnectedness of humans, animals, and the environment. The consultant will work closely with multidisciplinary teams to enhance public health outcomes through integrated strategies.

This role encompasses the following responsibilities:

1. Zoonotic Disease Prevention and Control

- Investigate outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, which are illnesses transmissible between animals and humans, by collecting samples and analyzing epidemiological data.
- Lead surveillance, risk assessment, and response strategies for zoonotic diseases, including rabies, leptospirosis, and avian influenza (H5N1).
- Collaborate with epidemiologists and health officials to investigate outbreaks and implement control measures.
- Develop and disseminate guidelines for managing zoonotic risks in various settings.
- Collect and interpret surveillance data on animal diseases to identify trends and predict potential risks to public health, informing proactive interventions.

2. Preparedness for Emerging Threats (e.g., H5N1)

- Collaborate with human health professionals, government agencies, and agricultural organizations to coordinate responses to public health emergencies.
- Develop and implement preparedness plans for emerging zoonotic threats, with a focus on avian influenza (H5N1).
- Coordinate with relevant agencies to enhance surveillance and response capabilities.
- Provide training and resources to stakeholders on emerging disease threats.

3. Environmental Health and Risk Assessment

- Evaluate the impact of environmental factors on the emergence and spread of diseases at the human-animal-environment interface.
- Contribute to environmental health assessments related to animal habitats and waste management.
- Perform risk assessments for potential public health threats related to animal populations, such as emerging infectious diseases or environmental contaminants.

4. Education and Community Outreach

- Develop and implement public health programs aimed at preventing disease transmission from animals to humans, including vaccination campaigns and public education initiatives.

- Design and deliver educational programs to inform the public about zoonotic diseases and preventive measures.
- Engage with communities to promote responsible animal ownership and biosecurity practices.
- Collaborate with schools, healthcare providers, and community organizations to raise awareness of One Health principles.

5. Food Safety and Security

- Conduct inspections of food production facilities, slaughterhouses, and animal shelters to ensure compliance with public health regulations and animal welfare standards.
- Assess and monitor animal health practices affecting the safety of the food supply.
- Work with agricultural and food safety agencies to ensure compliance with health regulations.
- Participate in the development of policies to prevent foodborne illnesses originating from animal products.

6. Animal Population and Disease Management

- Oversee programs related to the control of animal populations, including stray and feral animals, to mitigate public health risks.
- Implement disease management protocols in animal populations to prevent transmission to humans.
- Advise on humane and effective strategies for animal population control.
- Support initiatives aimed at reducing environmental contamination from animal sources.
- Provide expert consultation on animal health issues that impact human well-being, advising policymakers on regulatory changes and best practices.

Minimum Qualifications

- Must possess a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (“DVM”) degree and a Master’s degree in Public Health from an accredited college or university OR have completed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Epidemic Intelligence Service Program.
- Must possess a current and active license to practice veterinary medicine in the State of Hawaii, as per Chapter 471, HRS.
- Must have four (4) years of veterinary experience in which two (2) shall have involved veterinary public health. Possession of a Ph.D. in public health or other pertinent veterinary field from an accredited college or university may be substituted for two (2) years of the veterinary experience requirement.
- Must possess a valid State of Hawaii driver’s license.
- Must meet all requirements outlined in Chapter 471, HRS and Title 16 Chapter 101, HAR.

Desirable Skills

- Epidemiological Investigation: Essential for identifying sources of disease outbreaks, tracing transmission paths, and implementing control measures in animal and human populations.

- Risk Communication: Crucial for translating complex scientific information into understandable messages for the public, policymakers, and industry stakeholders to encourage compliance and mitigate panic.
- Policy Development and Implementation: Important for translating scientific findings into effective public health policies and regulations, and for overseeing their practical application.
- Interagency Collaboration: Necessary for working effectively with diverse groups, including human health agencies, agricultural departments, law enforcement, and international organizations, to achieve shared public health goals.
- Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Vital for analyzing complex data, identifying root causes of public health issues, and developing innovative solutions under pressure.
- Adaptability and Resilience: Important for responding to rapidly evolving public health crises, adjusting strategies based on new information, and maintaining effectiveness in high-stress environments.
- Ethical Judgment: Essential for making decisions that balance animal welfare, public health, economic impact, and individual rights, especially in sensitive situations like culling or quarantine.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Crucial for building trust and gaining cooperation from farmers, industry leaders, local communities, and international partners to implement public health initiatives effectively.