

# Global Links between Animal and Human Health

Tracy McCracken, DVM, Veterinary Medicine,  
Virginia – Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine

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Tracy McCracken sought a career in international development that would utilize her experience in agriculture, conservation, and veterinary medicine. While earning her degree in wildlife biology and a master's in tropical animal health, she worked on livestock and wildlife projects in East Africa, and managed projects promoting agricultural use of native animal and plant species in South America. Later, Tracy focused on public health in developing nations. "Veterinary medicine is not just dogs and cats," she explains.

Her background was put to use as a AAAS Diplomacy Fellow at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where Tracy split her time between the Office of Agriculture and the Office of Global Health. She served as a livestock technical advisor, designing and evaluating animal health and production projects, primarily in East Africa, and she also helped address zoonotic diseases (those that pass between animals and humans), supporting the Avian Influenza Team to design farm-based strategies to control the spread of avian influenza in developing nations. Her efforts included developing courses for veterinarians in developing nations to improve disease investigation skills, and coordinating methods to enhance communication between human and animal-health professionals. These

projects led Tracy to keep her bags packed for significant travel across Africa.

"The timing was impeccable" for her fellowship opportunity, Tracy says. 2006 was the height of pandemic influenza, "so people were looking for scientists with a background in animal health. I chose USAID because of the international aspect of its work and the fact that they are on the ground designing and implementing projects," she explains. "I felt I could have a direct impact in the countries affected by avian influenza and other diseases. In developing

nations people are very dependent on their livestock and have close, intimate contact with their animals. Keeping livestock healthy is vital to protecting both human health and livelihoods."

Although focused internationally, Tracy believes her biggest accomplishment was at USAID headquarters, helping to establish connections between offices. "My service helped forge relationships and demonstrated the importance of linking human and animal health." She now continues to promote those links in her new role as deputy coordinator for wildlife disease at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome.

