

EDITORIAL

It is our pleasure to come up with the 37th volume of Nepalese Veterinary Journal (NVJ). The current issue of NVJ includes a range of original research and review articles, short communications and case studies on several aspects of animal husbandry including health, breeding, nutrition, and management of livestock, pets and wildlife, and public health. Some of the specific areas covered include microbiology, epidemiology, prevention and control of parasitic and infectious animal diseases including zoonoses; antimicrobial resistance; COVID-19; ethnoveterinary medicine; and policy review. We believe that this information will be useful to the concerned stakeholders such as veterinarians, animal scientists, public health workers, farmers and policy makers.

This year has been challenging due to the unprecedented emergence of the novel Coronavirus known as SARS-CoV-2 from Wuhan, China in late December 2019. The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), caused by this novel virus, became pandemic and has affected more than 118.7 million people and killed more than 2.6 million people as of 11 March 2021 from more than 200 countries across the world. The economic losses have been tremendous and its full spectrum has yet to be unfolded. The SARS-CoV-2 emerged from the bat but the intermediate host through which it successfully jumped into the human is still under investigation. This pandemic further underscores the importance of one health approach to tackle diseases that occur at the human-animal-environment interface.

Nepal also remained as one of the affected countries from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the mortality rate is lower than other parts of the world. By 11 March 2021, 275,070 people were confirmed to be affected from COVID-19 out of which 3,012 people died. Five veterinary laboratories have been utilized in the COVID-19 diagnosis, which was particularly important during the initial days when there were only a few laboratories with diagnostic facilities for COVID-19 in Nepal. This type of one health collaboration needs to be extended in the future and a functional one health platform should be established in Nepal. The proposed Center for Disease Control (CDC), and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) of the Government of Nepal need to be developed as true multisectoral institutions with fair representation from all one health partners. The operationalization of “One Health Strategy 2019” of the Government of Nepal is the need of the hour to tackle diseases and problems that occur at the human-animal-environment interface that include Antimicrobial Resistance, Zoonotic Influenza, Rabies, Tuberculosis, Brucellosis and emerging problems like COVID-19. The prioritization of zoonotic diseases to streamline the limited resources is also the need of the hour.

The COVID-19 pandemic equally affected the livestock sector, especially the poultry and dairy sub-sectors, due to disruption in the supply chain and reduced consumption owing to several media rumours promoting the link of animal products with SARS-CoV-2 transmission. This has highlighted the need for timely government interventions to support farmers in these types of emergencies, the development of cold storage facilities and effective risk communication strategies. The livestock sector which was badly hit by the indirect effect of COVID-19 is also affected by several endemic and emerging disease problems. A new disease, Lumpy skin disease, which affects cattle and buffaloes, was confirmed for the first time in Nepal in 2020. Thousands of cattle and buffaloes were affected and farmers suffered losses due to reduced milk production. Nepal is also at imminent risk of African swine fever, a devastating pig disease, after its confirmation in India in May 2020. High and low pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI and LPAI) continue to

affect the poultry industry. Unlike H5N1 outbreaks in the earlier years, another strain H5N8 has been dominating in the outbreaks of early 2021. An endemic Newcastle disease (Ranikhet) of poultry has also taken an epidemic form. Several outbreaks have been reported across the country. The emergence and reemergence of several infectious livestock diseases call for the need of an “Infectious Animal Disease Control Act” for the timely control and containment of infectious animal diseases so as to minimize economic losses and promote public health by reducing the chances of disease spillover events.

Nepal is gradually becoming self-sufficient in livestock and fish products such as meat, milk, eggs and fish. To maintain the current status and fulfill the growing demand for animal protein, there is a need to increase investment in the livestock and fisheries sector from all three tiers of government. Breeding, feeding and health management of livestock and fish need to be enhanced through effective policies and investments in the public-private partnership model.

Nepal Veterinary Association (NVA) is a scientific professional organization of Nepalese veterinarians aimed at strengthening the technical capabilities of member veterinarians and safeguarding the veterinary profession in Nepal. NVA publishes the Nepalese Veterinary Journal (NVJ), an online accessible scientific journal indexed in Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL). The publication aims to share scientific knowledge and technology among members and stakeholders at home and abroad. We welcome original scientific research and review articles, short communications, case studies and perspectives in the area of veterinary science, animal science, food safety, public health and other cross-cutting issues. The guidelines for authors can be accessed through <https://www.nepjol.info/index.php/nvj/about>.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the authors and reviewers for their hard work and valuable contribution to the veterinary profession. We would also like to acknowledge Ms. Pramina Shrestha for her secretarial service. We are also indebted to the executive committee of NVA for their support and encouragement.

We apologize for errors, if any, despite our effort to minimize them. We welcome constructive suggestion from our readers.

Editorial Board