



‘Vaccinating hens improves animal welfare’

Calls are increasing for chickens to be vaccinated against avian flu. Currently, the virus is being tackled by culling all the animals in infected and adjoining barns and by requiring all other poultry to be kept indoors through the winter. PhD candidate Joost van Herten says this is the wrong way to implement the Dutch One Health policy.

‘In this policy we want to promote the health of humans, animals and the environment in an integrated approach,’ says Van Herten, who recently got his PhD on the ethics of zoonoses. ‘But in practice you often

see a conflict of interests between people and animals, where the people win. In this case, we don’t vaccinate chickens because other countries ban imports of vaccinated poultry. Trade interests trump animal welfare.’

‘Vaccination is better than culling,’ says Van Herten. ‘The vaccine protects the bird and prevents the virus from mutating into a variant that makes humans ill. But vaccinations are not enough, he adds. ‘We have to eliminating the causes of pandemics and look at the concentration of poultry farms too. Environmental health is the basis of One Health.’ AS