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Tuesday, Sept. 15, 2009

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K-STATE'S MICHAEL CATES NAMED TO EXECUTIVE POSITION ON THE ONE HEALTH COMMISSION

MANHATTAN — Michael Cates, director of Kansas State University's master of public health program, has been named secretary and treasurer of the One Health Commission, a national group established to spotlight the connections between human, animal and environmental health and the benefits of a collaborative approach to better health for all.

The commission is made up of representatives from eight major organizations involved in health education, research and practice, and represents a call for greater cooperation across multiple disciplines at the local, national and global level. The goal is optimal health for people, domestic animals, wildlife and the environment.

Cates, who is also K-State's James B. Nichols Professor of Veterinary Public Health, will represent the American Veterinary Medical Association as a member of the commission's board of directors.

The formation of the commission comes at a time of heightened concern by policymakers and public health officials about the potential spread of newly emerging infectious diseases such as the H1N1 influenza virus and increasing threats posed by emerging zoonotic diseases, food- and water-borne diseases, and environmental change.

Before retiring in 2008 as a brigadier general in the U.S. Army, Cates was the first veterinarian to lead the Army's main public health organization, the Center for Health Promotion and Preventive Medicine. He has long been an advocate of using the entire spectrum of expertise in human, animal and environmental health to find innovative ways to improve overall health.

"It makes a lot of sense to find synergistic, joint solutions to our health challenges in our nation and our world. The health of our planet and the health of all its inhabitants are inextricably linked, and our traditional methods are no longer adequate," Cates said. "The One Health approach simply encourages and facilitates collaboration among medical, veterinary, public health, environmental health, wildlife and the many other experts who can impact global health."

Cates said that K-State's master of public health program is a good example of such an interdisciplinary approach to education because it leverages faculty and staff from at least eight departments in four colleges and the K-State Graduate School.

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In the program, students develop a broad understanding of traditional public health while also addressing a wide variety of specific issues such as zoonotic diseases, other infectious diseases, environmental toxicology, food safety and biosecurity, human nutrition, and physical activity.

"We are very fortunate at K-State to have such breadth and depth in health-related expertise among our faculty and staff. This allows us to offer a tremendous blend of core public health courses and more specific ones in our four unique areas of emphasis in our master of public health degree program," Cates said. "It's exciting to see such interest and work in One Health here and other locations around our nation. Now, we just need to build on these successes and strengthen the impact."

Cates also is a distinguished diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Preventive Medicine. In his 28-year career in the U.S. Army, he also served as chief of the U.S. Army Veterinary Corps.

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