

VETERINARY PUBLIC HEALTH BILL 202X

DEPARTMENT OF VETERINARY SERVICES MALAYSIA

The Department of Veterinary Services, Malaysia is proposing the Veterinary Public Health Bill 202x. This act is to consolidate the laws on Veterinary Public Health within Peninsular Malaysia and Federal Territory of Labuan for the control and prevention of zoonotic foodborne disease and contaminant on animal - based foods to achieve food safety; to regulate activities related to pollution and nuisances in slaughterhouses, livestock farms and animal product processing plants and matters incidental thereto or connected therewith.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 The National Agro-Food Policy 1.0 (2011-2020) and 2.0 (2021-2030) was formulated to address challenges in domestic and global markets to ensure sustainable production for food security and safety. In line with the effort to develop Malaysia as a high-income nation, it is anticipated that the National Agro-Food Policy will increase the revenue of farmers as well as agro-entrepreneurs. This, in turn, will allow the agro-sector to develop into a steady and resilient industry. The main objectives of the National Agrofood Policy 1.0 & 2.0 are: to address food security and safety to ensure availability, affordability and accessibility; to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the agro-food industry; and to increase the income level of agropreneurs.

All the national priorities in policy of livestock development and trade are defined in the National Agro-Food Policy 1.0 & 2.0 and aligned with specific strategies documents such as Strategic Dairy Development Plan and National Ruminant Policy.

To strengthen national food security, the National Food Security Framework (NFSF), which encompasses four (4) main components – availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability and sustainability- has been developed. These key components align with the latest concepts recommended by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The National Food Security Policy (DSMN Action Plan) 2021-2025 comprising five strategic thrusts, 15 strategies, and 96 initiatives, is expected to ensure the continuity of the national food supply at all times, particularly in the face of unforeseen circumstances. The Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) is one of the key agencies under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (KPKM) that supports the aspirations and direction of the national food sector to become more

sustainable, resilient, and technologically advanced. This effort aims to drive economic growth, environmental sustainability, and human well-being while prioritizing national food security and nutrition. In line with the implementation of the National Agrofood Policy 2021-2030 (NAP 2.0) under Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (KPKM), DVS plays a role in one of the four (4) main subsectors, namely the livestock sector, which serves as a source of food and is given specific emphasis to ensure food security.

1.2 The Department of Veterinary Services plays a role in ensuring that the delivery of veterinary services to the public is relevant and of high quality to meet current demands. This aligns with the department's mission to provide quality veterinary services that safeguard animal health, veterinary public health, animal welfare, and the sustainable development of the animal industry for the betterment of humanity. Five (5) objectives have been outlined to clearly define the department's functions and roles:

- I. To empower and maintain a trustworthy and conducive animal health status for the animal industry;
- II. To ensure public health through the control of zoonotic diseases and the production of clean and safe animal-based food;
- III. To promote sustainable livestock production and value-added industries;
- IV. To explore, develop, and promote the optimal use of technology and resources in animal-based industries; and
- V. To advocate for animal welfare practices in all aspects of husbandry and production systems.

1.3 The World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) supports its members to improve and strengthen their Veterinary Services governance and enhance their compliance with WOAH international standards. The WOAH/OIE PVS Pathway is part of an internationally recognised methodology to evaluate countries current status and propose steps to reach their strategic goals. Following a request to the WOAH/OIE and based on the outcomes of the WOAH/OIE PVS Evaluation done in February 2016, a WOAH/OIE PVS Gap Analysis mission was conducted in Malaysia in August 2017, by a team of independent OIE certified experts with Dr Nikša Barišić as team leader and Dr Cristina Ramirez and Dr Emilio A. Leon as technical experts.

The national priorities relevant to the VS have been identified, primarily based on the National Agro-Food Policy (2011-2020) (NAP4), which is a strategic document targeting the agriculture sector, formulated to address challenges in domestic and global markets to ensure sustainable food production for food security and safety.

The following national priorities in livestock development and trade policy were identified:

- ✓ Ensure food security by increasing the self-sufficiency level of national livestock production (import substitution) through the implementation of national policies in dairy production and ruminant meat production;
- ✓ Increase access to international export markets of animal products, especially for the poultry industry;
- ✓ Strengthen the identification and traceability system for animals and products of animal origin.

Technical priorities in veterinary public health:

- ✓ Protect public health through the efficient control of zoonotic diseases;
- ✓ Enhance regulation and control of the distribution and use of veterinary drugs and biologicals;
- ✓ Ensure adequate ante- and post- mortem inspection in all slaughterhouses and for all species;
- ✓ Ensure a similar level of sanitary standards for all establishments that produce, process and distribute food of animal origin in all premises that supply the national/local market.

Technical priorities in animal health:

- ✓ Strengthen the surveillance system and the early detection of notifiable disease;
- ✓ Enhance disease control programmes and the progressive eradication of endemic diseases;
- ✓ Strengthen enforcement of animal welfare regulations.

Policy in organisation and management of the VS:

- ✓ Ensure adequate and appropriate staffing of veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals;
- ✓ Develop an efficient system for the delegation of official tasks to private veterinarians for the purpose of implementation of official veterinary programmes;
- ✓ Improve internal coordination between the three main competent authorities of the VS and external coordination with MOH and other governmental agencies;
- ✓ Strengthen existing consultation mechanisms with stakeholders from the private sector.

1.4 Starting from 2020, to strengthen its roles and functions, the Department of Veterinary Services Malaysia has streamlined its organization through restructuring, updating existing positions, and creating two (2) new divisions: the Veterinary Public Health Division and the Veterinary Regulatory Division. Specifically, these divisions are tasked with ensuring food safety for animal-based food products. Through this function, the department is responsible for providing veterinary inspection services at all levels of the animal-based food production chain and its products, as stipulated in the Animals Act 1953 (Revised 2006), the Animal Feed Act 2009, the Slaughterhouses (Privatization) Act 1993, the Meat Inspection

Rules 1985, and the Federal Ministerial Order (No. 3) 2020. Therefore, the strengthening of DVS's role through amendments to the Animals Act 1953 or the establishment of the Veterinary Public Health Act 202X is seen as a relevant legal step concerning activities under Veterinary Public Health to control and prevent foodborne zoonotic diseases as a preventative measure to achieve food safety assurance for animal-based food and products. This also includes regulating activities related to controlling pollution from waste and fly nuisances at slaughterhouse, animal-based product processing plants, and livestock farms. These measures are viewed as key steps in fulfilling the department's role in the context of Veterinary Public Health.

1.5 Veterinary Public Health encompasses a vast scope, including animal health, human health, and environmental sustainability. Veterinary Public Health focuses on the application of veterinary science to protect and enhance the physical, mental, and social well-being of humans and their environment. Generally, the Veterinary Public Health also covers the hygiene of food products derived from animals and zoonotic diseases. The importance of Veterinary Public Health has grown with increasing public awareness of health issues closely related to food safety, as more cases of animal diseases transmitting to humans and foodborne zoonotic diseases have been reported in recent years. The scope of Veterinary Public Health includes production and safety of animal-based food products:

- a) Ensuring food safety from farm to table and its related activities, such as monitoring livestock farms and animals, controlling the slaughtering and processing of animal products, overseeing the import and export of animal products, regulating transportation and distribution, conducting risk assessment and communication, disease monitoring (especially zoonotic and foodborne zoonotic diseases), implementing vector control programs, and managing waste in the farm.

1.6 **Referring to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) Terrestrial Animal Health Code, the roles and responsibilities of veterinary services in ensuring food safety, particularly for animal-based products, are outlined to meet legal requirements within the country and in importing countries, as well as to safeguard and promote human welfare.** These include:

- I. Chapter 6.2: "The Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety Systems";
- II. Article 6.2.4: Roles and responsibilities of Veterinary Services in food safety systems;
- III. Articles 6.7-6.10: Introduction to the recommendations for controlling antimicrobial resistance, monitoring the quantities of antimicrobials used in animal husbandry, responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine, and risk assessment for

antimicrobial resistance arising from the use of antimicrobials in animals;

IV. Articles 3.4.11: Veterinary Medicinal Products;

V. Articles 3.4.12: Human food production chain.

1.7 The expansion of the scope and functions of Veterinary Inspections is necessary as the tasks are increasingly focused on ensuring that animal-based and products produced are consistently clean and safe for consumption. Veterinary inspections for food safety are conducted comprehensively along the entire food production chain, including inspections at the stages of animal feed preparation, farming, abattoirs, and processing plants. This approach aligns with the concept of Veterinary Public Health and food safety from farm to table. These services are also in line with the **Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety for animal-derived products as stated in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapter 6.1 – The Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety:**

“The role of the Veterinary Services has traditionally extended from the farm to the slaughterhouse, where veterinarians have a dual responsibility – epidemiological surveillance of animal diseases and ensuring the safety and suitability of meat. The education and training of veterinarians, which includes both animal health (including zoonoses) and food hygiene components, makes them uniquely equipped to play a central role in ensuring food safety, especially the safety of foods of animal origin. As described below, in addition to veterinarians, several other professional groups are involved in supporting integrated food safety approaches throughout the food chain. In many countries the role of the Veterinary Services has been extended to include subsequent stages of the food chain in the “farm to fork” continuum.”

2. STATEMENT OF ISSUES

2.1 At present, the **elements of Veterinary Public Health and regulatory activities are not explicitly defined or stated in the Animals Act 1953. The enhancement of the functions and roles of veterinary services must align with the changing times and the evolution of the livestock and animal industries at both national and global levels.**

2.2 Outbreaks of diseases such as avian influenza (H5N1) and rabies in Malaysia have heightened public awareness and underscored the need for multidisciplinary collaboration to detect and prevent the spread of these threats more rapidly and effectively. Of the 135 diseases gazetted under the Animals Act 1953, 63 are zoonotic diseases that can cause severe infections, fatalities, and significant economic consequences for the

country, in addition to posing threats to food security and public health that must be monitored and controlled. For example, humans can be infected with avian influenza either through direct contact with infected poultry or contaminated equipment carrying the avian influenza virus. If humans are infected with a subtype that has already adapted to become a human influenza virus (H1N1, H2N2, H3N2), human-to-human transmission can occur. The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that the avian influenza virus is highly dangerous and easily transmissible. Typically, this influenza virus spreads among poultry, but pigs act as a “mixing pot” causing genetic changes that result in the emergence of additional serotypes. The increasing number of H5N1 bird flu viruses detected in mammals has raised concerns that many serotypes have adapted and can more easily infect humans. The H5N1 virus has led to the culling of millions of birds across Asia since late 2003 and claimed 188 lives worldwide as of June 2007. By June 2007, a total of 309 individuals had been infected with H5N1 bird flu, and 188 (61%) of them had died. A total of 79 deaths were reported in Indonesia and 17 in Thailand. Malaysia, which neighbours Indonesia and Thailand, is at high risk of H5N1 outbreaks. Malaysia experienced avian influenza outbreaks in 2007 and 2017. On June 2, 2007, 60 chickens died suddenly in Kampung Paya Jaras Hilir Hujung, Sungai Buloh, Selangor, due to H5N1. The second outbreak was reported on February 28, 2017, in Kampung Pulau Tebu, Kota Bharu, Kelantan. This incident involved a group of 26 free-range chickens, 16 of which exhibited clinical signs such as swollen faces, loss of appetite, cyanotic combs, and high mortality rates. The occurrence of zoonotic and foodborne zoonotic disease outbreaks negatively impacts the export of live animals and animal products, as importing countries impose export bans on Malaysian products when outbreaks are detected. Veterinary public health has extensive implications for international trade, particularly in managing animal health, diseases, and food safety.

- 2.3 Additionally, the occurrence of tuberculosis (TB) infections is one of the zoonotic diseases that warrants attention and continuous monitoring. TB infections were officially recorded as early as 1936 in Malaya at seven slaughterhouses (then located in Singapore, Penang, Malacca, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, and Pahang), where a total of 24 carcasses were completely condemned (4 cattle and 20 pigs), and 1,188 carcasses were partially condemned (24 cattle and 1,164 pigs). This disease is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis*, which can lead to chronic coughing in livestock and humans. The infection can spread widely, with heightened risks due to the practice of selling raw milk in local markets. Consequently, TB infections in animals necessitated the implementation of meat inspection services and milk pasteurization procedures as essential components of veterinary public health. Today, TB re-emerges as a concern with the rising global statistics of infected individuals. In 2007 alone, it was estimated that 13.7% of chronic TB patients were reported, with 9.3 million new cases identified, resulting in 1.8 million deaths, particularly in developing

countries. The increasing number of migrant workers further elevates the risk of infection in both livestock and humans. Given these developments, it is crucial for the Department of Veterinary Services to prioritize this disease.

2.4 Brucellosis is another zoonotic disease that can infect humans. However, awareness among Malaysians regarding the dangers of Brucellosis to humans remains low. Brucellosis is caused by infection with the bacteria *Brucella abortus* in cattle and buffaloes, *Brucella melitensis* in goats and sheep, and *Brucella suis* in pigs. This disease can lead to abortion and infertility in livestock, causing significant losses to farmers if their animals are infected with the bacteria. In humans, it can result in recurrent fever, infertility, and orchitis in males. The first case of *Brucella melitensis* infection in sheep in Malaysia was detected in 1994 at the Veterinary Institute, Kluang. An unusual abortion rate (20.5%) was reported in a flock of sheep, and during this episode, several department personnel were also infected, requiring quarantine and hospital treatment. The first case of *Brucella abortus* infection in cattle was identified through bacterial isolation in 1950. The isolation was obtained from a case of abortion at the Veterinary Institute, Kluang, Johor. In 2019, there was a case of *Brucella* contamination in raw goat milk. Eight individuals were infected with Brucellosis after consuming raw goat milk from a goat farm in Selangor. Investigations revealed that the raw milk consumed by the victims had been contaminated with *Brucella* bacteria.

2.5 Furthermore, food safety concerns are frequently linked to foodborne zoonotic diseases that originate from livestock-derived food products. The classification of zoonotic diseases by animal type is as follows:

Species	Zoonotic Diseases (example)
Poultry	i. Avian Influenza (H5N1) ii. Pathogenic Salmonella bacteria (S. Enteritidis, S. Typhimurium, S. galinarum, S. pullorum) iii. Campylobacter spp. iv. E. coli
Ruminants	i. Brucellosis ii. Tuberculosis iii. Melioidosis iv. Fasciolosis v. Sarcocystosis vi. BSE/VcJD vii. Anthrax viii. Q fever ix. Leptospirosis

	x. E. coli 0157
Swine	i. Japanese Encephalitis (JE) ii. Nipah iii. Swine flu (H1N1) iv. B. suis v. Taenia solium
Exotic Animals (Snakes, Frogs, Monitor Lizards)	i. Salmonellosis

2.6 The existing legislation under the Animals Act 1953 is insufficient to control the risks and hazards posed by contaminated livestock-derived products and to prevent the spread of such diseases among humans. This is due to the following reasons:

- i. Veterinary inspections of animal-derived products at slaughterhouses and poultry processing plants, both domestic and international, are not comprehensive.
- ii. Do not include control over animal-derived products, including raw materials suspected to be contaminated.
- iii. Control measures are only implemented at the farm level and are not comprehensive at the level of slaughterhouses and poultry processing plants.
- iv. Do not include enforcement actions at slaughterhouses and processing plants.
- v. Do not cover disinfection and sanitation measures at slaughterhouses and poultry processing plants suspected of contamination.
- vi. Disposal of contaminated animal-derived products at slaughterhouses and processing plants is not fully implemented.

2.7 The departmental accreditation program, which has been in operation since 1980, is voluntary and is not grounded in any legal authority under the

Animals Act 1953 (revised 2006), but is administered on an administrative basis.

2.8 At present, there are no specific regulations under the Animals Act 1953 pertaining to the veterinary inspection of animal-derived products, which hampers the ability to conduct comprehensive veterinary inspections. The monitoring activities currently carried out throughout the animal-derived food supply chain by the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) are as follows:

i. Farm Level:

The Poultry Farming Enactment, the Pig Farming Enactment, the Cattle and Buffalo Registration Enactment, and the Malaysia Good Agriculture Practice (myGAP) & myOrganic certification are voluntary.

ii. Slaughterhouse Level:

- Slaughterhouse (Privatization) Act 1993
Licensing of private slaughterhouses in accordance with the prescribed conditions.
- Animals (Control of Slaughter) Regulations 2009
Regulates the activities of slaughtering (Cattle, Buffalo, Goat, Sheep and swine)
- Meat Inspection Regulations 1985
Key provisions: Facilities and operational procedures required at slaughterhouses to ensure hygiene, sanitation, and meat inspection, the responsibilities of slaughterhouse managers, and the requirement for meat inspections to be conducted according to the prescribed procedures and assessments.

iii. Processing Level:

The Veterinary Health Mark (VHM) Certification and Good Veterinary Hygienic Practice (GVHP) Certification are voluntary and not based on authority under the Animals Act 1953 (revised 2006), but are administratively managed. The VHM certification requires compliance with Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) and HACCP systems, while GVHP certification requires adherence to Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP). The VHM and GVHP certifications are granted to slaughterhouses and animal processing plants that comply with veterinary public health standards.

2.9 Veterinary inspections at farms, slaughterhouses, and animal product processing plants cannot be conducted comprehensively due to the voluntary nature of the accreditation applications. This may present a risk to the assurance of safety and quality of the animal-derived products produced. Furthermore, the department's voluntary accreditation program also **poses a risk to consumers, as not all**

premises are inspected and the scope of inspections is not conducted comprehensively.

2.10 Enforcement actions cannot be implemented comprehensively, and the department is unable to take appropriate measures against any premises that fail to comply with the certification standards and requirements, which could potentially jeopardize the safety of livestock-derived food products.

2.11 The department is of the view that industry stakeholders, such as traders, importers, and exporters, will also be adversely affected when the safety of animal-derived products is not assured. This could result in significant losses in the event of non-compliance with products originating from premises that are not subject to comprehensive monitoring.

2.12 Veterinary inspection duties remain inadequately focused on ensuring that animal-derived food and products are consistently clean and safe for consumption. This approach is not aligned with the principles of veterinary public health and food safety from farm to table. Veterinary services should be in accordance with the Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety as outlined in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapter 6.1. - The Role of Veterinary Services in Food Safety.

“The role of the Veterinary Services has traditionally extended from the farm to the slaughterhouse, where veterinarians have a dual responsibility – epidemiological surveillance of animal diseases and ensuring the safety and suitability of meat. The education and training of veterinarians, which includes both animal health (including zoonoses) and food hygiene components, makes them uniquely equipped to play a central role in ensuring food safety, especially the safety of foods of animal origin. As described below, in addition to veterinarians, several other professional groups are involved in supporting integrated food safety approaches throughout the food chain. In many countries the role of the Veterinary Services has been extended to include subsequent stages of the food chain in the “farm to fork” continuum.”

2.13 The control of food hazards at farms, slaughterhouses, and animal product processing plants (both edible and inedible) is insufficiently effective, resulting in challenges in managing animal diseases, including zoonotic diseases and foodborne illnesses, across the entire livestock food production chain.

2.14 **The establishment of the Meat Inspection Regulations 1985 is not explicitly stated under the Animals Act 1953.** The Meat Inspection Regulations 1985 were established under subsection 86(2) of the Animals Act 1953 [Act 647]. These regulations were gazetted on January 10, 2005, for Peninsular Malaysia, and on November 24, 2005, for the Federal Territory of Labuan. However, these regulations were gazetted without Regulation 9 (which pertains to inspection). It merely refers to the power to make rules under 86(2)(ea). The most effective control to ensure that meat is fit for human consumption is through meat inspection at slaughterhouses, where the primary responsibilities are:

- i. Ante-mortem Inspection – The examination of livestock prior to slaughter to ensure that only healthy animals are slaughtered, while those deemed unfit are segregated for further examination. The meat inspection activities conducted by the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) are outlined in **Appendix 2.**
- ii. Post-mortem Inspection – The examination performed after slaughter to ensure that only clean and safe meat is provided to consumers. This post-mortem inspection is the second stage of the inspection process, as some animals may appear healthy and show no clinical signs of disease; however, post-mortem inspection can reveal evidence of disease, such as lesions on the carcass, meat, lungs, liver, spleen, heart, and other organs. The meat inspection activities conducted by DVS are outlined in **Appendix 2.**

The primary objective of meat inspection is to prevent and detect public health hazards, such as foodborne pathogens and contaminants, ensuring that meat is safe for human consumption. **Ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections may only be carried out by veterinary officers or any veterinary authority appointed as meat inspectors by the Director-General of Veterinary Services. Regulatory activities and monitoring of meat inspections cannot be conducted comprehensively due to a shortage of personnel (meat inspectors) and the absence of specific legislation mandating the requirement for meat inspection at all poultry slaughterhouses.** Consequently, the quality and safety of meat cannot be assured, which adversely affects export activities. Livestock or meat that has not undergone inspection raises concerns regarding its safety for consumption. Such livestock or meat may be infected or contaminated with zoonotic disease agents, such as tuberculosis, brucellosis, sarcocystosis, avian influenza (bird flu), salmonellosis, E. coli, campylobacter, and other pathogens, which can pose significant risks to human health, affect fertility, cause chronic diseases requiring ongoing treatment, lead to disease outbreaks, and potentially result in death.

2.15 According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 75% of newly emerging diseases in humans over the past decade have been caused by pathogens originating from animals or animal-derived products. Meat inspection is a practice implemented internationally, as outlined in the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH), **Terrestrial Animal Health Code Chapter 6.2, "Control of Biological Hazards of Animal Health and Public Health Importance Through Ante- and Post-Mortem Meat Inspection."**

2.16 **The activities of poultry slaughter and processing (chicken, duck, quail) cannot be effectively regulated as they are not licensed under any specific legislation, except in the state of Pahang, where the Pahang State Poultry Enactment empowers the implementation of the Pahang State Poultry Slaughterhouse (Control and Licensing) Regulations 2017.** It is important to note that poultry slaughterhouses and processing plants are licensed by the local authorities (PBT), but these licenses only cover business operations and **do not consider the regulation of veterinary public health. For premises located outside the jurisdiction of the local authorities, no licenses are issued, and there is no oversight by any regulatory body.**

The production of chicken/duck meat in the country is carried out by processing plants or poultry slaughterhouses, which include those bearing the Veterinary Health Mark (VHM), Good Veterinary Hygienic Practice (GVHP) certification, and also Small-Scale Chicken Slaughtering Centres (PPASK), which do not bear VHM/GVHP certification. In 2009, the country produced approximately 110 million poultry or about 20-30% of the total national production, with the remaining 70-80% produced by facilities without VHM or GVHP certification (processing less than 3,000 birds/day). However, the department's accreditation programs, namely Veterinary Health Mark (VHM) and Good Veterinary Hygienic Practice (GVHP), are voluntary and not based on the authority under the Animals Act 1953 (revised 2006), nor are they enforced through legislation. Furthermore, **for poultry slaughterhouses and processing plants such as the Small and Medium Scale Chicken Slaughtering premises which are not part of the department's accreditation programs, veterinary public health monitoring is not feasible due to the lack of legal provisions.**

2.17 **Importing countries impose export requirements for animal-derived products such as sausages, nuggets, processed products, pasteurized milk, frogs, monitor lizard meat, pythons, and others, which necessitate ongoing veterinary inspection monitoring by the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS).** This includes the requirement for a Veterinary Health Certificate (VHC), which must be verified by a duly authorized Veterinary Officer. Currently, the exportation of animal-derived products requires a Veterinary Health Certificate issued by the Veterinary Authority, along with a declaration from the Veterinary Authority concerning

animal disease control and the adherence to good veterinary hygiene practices.

- 2.18 **The global increase in cases of antibiotic resistance underscores the necessity for robust public health veterinary legislation to ensure the effective enforcement of antimicrobial use in animals.** Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) has become one of the most significant global health challenges, following the COVID-19 pandemic. It arises from the improper and indiscriminate use of antimicrobials in both human and animal health sectors. AMR poses a substantial threat to human and animal health, as well as to food production, particularly animal-based food products. In veterinary medicine, antimicrobials are primarily used for therapeutic purposes, disease prevention (prophylaxis), disease control (metaphylaxis), and as animal growth promoters (AGPs). **The uncontrolled and improper use of antimicrobials as AGPs is one of the leading contributors to the development of antimicrobial resistance.** At present, certain microorganisms, particularly bacteria, have developed full or partial resistance to antimicrobials such as antibiotics. **This resistance renders current antimicrobials ineffective in treating microbial infections in both humans and animals, resulting in untreatable diseases. Consequently, these diseases can escalate, ultimately leading to severe health outcomes, including the potential for human and animal fatalities.**
- 2.19 **Improperly managed waste from livestock farms and slaughterhouses/processing plants constitutes a significant source of water pollution, air pollution (including odors), and fly disturbances.** If not effectively controlled, such pollution poses a substantial risk to the nation's water supply and adversely affects the economy of livestock farmers due to increased veterinary costs and livestock losses. Additionally, it threatens environmental sustainability and human well-being. Livestock farms and slaughterhouses/processing plants, if left unchecked, are major contributors to these environmental hazards, with far-reaching consequences for the national economy, ecological balance, and public health.
- 2.20 **Currently, there are no specified microbiological standards for raw meat (poultry, ruminants, and pigs) and raw milk in any legislation, including the Animals Act 1953 and the Food Act 1983 along with its Food Regulations 1985.** The microbiological standards for raw meat in use at present are based on the guidelines provided in the Veterinary Public Health- Arahan Prosedur Tetap Veterinar Malaysia (APTVM) schedule, which serves only as a reference and is not legally mandated under any statutory framework. Furthermore, no microbiological standards have been established for raw milk.

2.21 **The veterinary laboratory services provided by DVS receive high demand from the industry, including slaughterhouses, poultry processing plants, and animal product facilities, as laboratory test results certified by DVS veterinary laboratories are required for the exportation of animal-based products to foreign markets. However, the capacity of these laboratories is limited, and they are unable to accept all samples submitted by the industry, especially those outside the annual DVS Animal Product Food Safety Monitoring Program. Furthermore, veterinary laboratories lack the legal authority to impose comprehensive fees, with existing charges limited to food analysis, while the fee structures under the Animal Ordinance remain outdated and insufficient. The increasing volume of laboratory samples originating from non-departmental sampling programs, particularly from private sector industries, has resulted in a rise in operational costs. This challenge is further exacerbated by the industry's demand for expedited turnaround times (TAT) that surpass the laboratories' existing capabilities.**

2.22 The demand for export applications and the issuance of Veterinary Health Certificates (VHC) has increased in tandem with the growth of the national industry. Statistical data from January to July 2023 indicates a significant rise in the exportation of animal-based products. Similarly, statistics on the import and export of livestock, animals, and animal-based products show consistent growth from 2013 to 2017. In light of this, there is a pressing need for the veterinary authority to regulate slaughterhouses, poultry processing plants, and facilities processing animal-based products. This regulation serves as a critical support mechanism to enhance productivity, ensure food security, improve food safety, facilitate food trade, and protect public health, particularly in the face of evolving food safety risks. **This regulatory requirement is not explicitly addressed under the existing Animals Act 1953, although such responsibilities have been carried out by DVS based on its expertise and capacity.**

3. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE BILL

3.1 The objectives and scope of the implementation of the Veterinary Public Health Bill are generally to:

- i. Expend the scope and functions of Veterinary Inspections as the tasks are increasingly focused on ensuring that animal-based and products produced are consistently clean and safe for consumption
- ii. Implement comprehensive and more effective veterinary inspections, conducted by 90% of veterinary inspectors within five years at livestock farms, slaughterhouses, abattoirs, and livestock product processing facilities.

- iii. Ensure meat inspection is conducted at all licensed government and private slaughterhouses, poultry slaughterhouses, and small and medium scale poultry slaughter premises by the year 2030.
- iv. Reduce incidents of foodborne illnesses originating from animal products, particularly foodborne zoonotic diseases, by 20% annually.
- v. Increase the percentage of animal product exports to international markets by 5% within five years, enhancing global trade opportunities and competitiveness through international recognition.
- vi. Ensure compliance with food safety standards for animal-based products by achieving at least 80% compliance in premises with relevant regulations, standards, and guidelines by the year 2030.

3.2 The Veterinary Public Health Bill 202x is proposed to be applicable only in Peninsular Malaysia and the Federal Territory of Labuan.

