



## News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Media Contacts: Kate Vossen  
(732) 675-8448

Investor Contacts: Michael DeCarbo  
(908) 740-1807

Pamela Eisele  
(267) 305-3558

### **First-of-its-Kind Study Reveals Concern about the Future of the Veterinary Profession**

#### **Results Presented at 2018 Veterinary Meeting & Expo (VMX)**

ORLANDO, Fla., Feb., 6, 2018 – Merck Animal Health (known as MSD Animal Health outside the United States and Canada) today announced the results of a large, well-controlled study with veterinarians designed to definitively quantify the prevalence of mental illness and stress in the veterinary profession and compare the findings to previous studies and the general U.S. population. Conducted in collaboration with the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and Merck Animal Health, the study found veterinarians age 45 and younger are more likely to experience serious psychological distress and only 27 percent of them would endorse the profession to a friend or family member.

“This survey is unique in that, for the first time, a nationally representative sample of veterinarians in the U.S. were asked about their wellbeing, which is a broader measure of happiness and life satisfaction than mental health alone,” said study investigator Linda Lord, Ph.D., D.V.M., academic and allied industry liaison lead, Merck Animal Health. “Based on the survey results, we are particularly concerned about younger veterinarians as they are the future of our profession. We must work together to promote a healthy lifestyle, including work/life balance, access to wellness resources and debt reduction.”

According to the Merck Animal Health Veterinary Wellbeing Study, about 1 in 20 veterinarians are suffering from serious psychological distress, which is in line with the general population. However, when segmenting the data by age, younger veterinarians are more impacted by the financial and emotional stresses of professional veterinary life, compared to both older male veterinarians and individuals in the general population. Depression (94%), burnout (88%) and anxiety (83%) are the most frequently reported conditions.

### **Veterinarians are feeling overstressed and undervalued**

Among veterinarians, high student debt was the top concern voiced, with 67 percent rating it as a critically important issue. In 2017, the average veterinary student graduated with more than \$138,000 in student debt, according to AVMA, which is nearly twice the average starting salary for a veterinarian, creating a significant strain on the future of the profession. Following student debt, respondents reported the other most serious issues facing young professionals today are stress levels, reported by 53 percent and suicides rates reported by 52 percent. Poor mental health is closely associated with the stresses of professional life – excessive work hours, poor work-life balance and student debt.

### **Treatment gap: Awareness about resources for mental health and wellbeing is low**

Only half of veterinarians with serious psychological distress are seeking help – creating a big mental health treatment gap. This is compounded by the fact that only few employers offer employee assistance programs. In addition, only 16 percent had ever accessed resources regarding wellbeing and mental health through national or state veterinary organizations.

“Veterinarians today cope with a physically and emotionally demanding occupation that is undergoing changes from increased competition to the declining ability of clients to pay for veterinary care. Moreover, veterinarians often find themselves giving up the things that improve wellbeing and provide a healthy balance in life, such as family, friends and time for self-care,” said Jen Brandt, LISW-S, Ph.D., director, wellbeing and diversity initiatives AVMA. “As an organization that serves veterinarians, our mission is to protect the health and welfare of our members and the future of the profession. As part of these efforts we continuously work to identify accessible resources and assistance related to wellbeing and mental health. Studies such as the Animal Health Veterinary Wellbeing Study provide helpful guidance on the types of resources and education that may be most beneficial.”

### **Concern for the future: Only 24 percent of veterinarians age 34 and younger would recommend a career in veterinary medicine**

The survey showed veterinarians today do not strongly endorse their profession. Only 41 percent of veterinarians overall would recommend the profession to a friend or family member; even large numbers of those that score high in wellbeing and mental health do not recommend the profession. The endorsement rate drops to 24 percent for those 34 years old and younger. In contrast, 62 percent of veterinarians age 65 and older would recommend the profession.

“Merck Animal Health is proud to partner with AVMA to conduct this important study to better understand the challenges facing the veterinary profession,” said Scott Bormann, vice president, U.S. commercial operations, Merck Animal Health. “We are committed to working with AVMA and others to support veterinarians by raising awareness and offering assistance and resources, including close to \$3 million in scholarships over the last three years, and will continue to look for ways to positively impact the well-being of practicing veterinarians, and enrich the possibilities for the future of this profession.”

### **Survey Methodology**

The online survey was conducted by Brakke Consulting in November 2017 among 3,540 of a sample of 20,000 randomly-selected veterinarians in the U.S. For mental health, the study used the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale to identify veterinarians suffering from serious psychological distress. For wellbeing, a customized index was created based on three widely recognized measures. Data were weighted based on age, gender and region of the U.S. All data were tested for statistical significance at the 95 percent confidence level. For the sample as a whole, the maximum margin of error is +/- 1.62 percent.

The study also compared results from respondents to employed adults in the University of Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), the longest-running longitudinal household study in the world. A key strength of the approaches leveraged in this research is the ability to benchmark findings from the veterinary population against those found in other studies examining veterinarians, as well as the general public.

### **About Merck Animal Health**

For more than a century, Merck, a leading global biopharmaceutical company, has been inventing for life, bringing forward medicines and vaccines for many of the world’s most challenging diseases. Merck Animal Health, known as MSD Animal Health outside the United States and Canada, is the global animal health business unit of Merck. Through its commitment to the Science of Healthier Animals™, Merck Animal Health offers veterinarians, farmers, pet owners and governments one of the widest range of veterinary pharmaceuticals, vaccines and health management solutions and services. Merck Animal Health is dedicated to preserving and improving the health, wellbeing and performance of animals. It invests extensively in dynamic and comprehensive R&D resources and a modern, global supply chain. Merck Animal Health is present in more than 50 countries, while its products are available in some 150 markets. For

more information, visit [www.merck-animal-health.com](http://www.merck-animal-health.com) or connect with us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and Twitter at @MerckAH.

### **Forward-Looking Statement of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA**

This news release of Merck & Co., Inc., Kenilworth, N.J., USA (the “company”) includes “forward-looking statements” within the meaning of the safe harbor provisions of the U.S. Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These statements are based upon the current beliefs and expectations of the company’s management and are subject to significant risks and uncertainties. If underlying assumptions prove inaccurate or risks or uncertainties materialize, actual results may differ materially from those set forth in the forward-looking statements.

Risks and uncertainties include but are not limited to, general industry conditions and competition; general economic factors, including interest rate and currency exchange rate fluctuations; the impact of pharmaceutical industry regulation and health care legislation in the United States and internationally; global trends toward health care cost containment; technological advances, new products and patents attained by competitors; challenges inherent in new product development, including obtaining regulatory approval; the company’s ability to accurately predict future market conditions; manufacturing difficulties or delays; financial instability of international economies and sovereign risk; dependence on the effectiveness of the company’s patents and other protections for innovative products; and the exposure to litigation, including patent litigation, and/or regulatory actions.

The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update any forward-looking statement, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Additional factors that could cause results to differ materially from those described in the forward-looking statements can be found in the company’s 2016 Annual Report on Form 10-K and the company’s other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) available at the SEC’s Internet site ([www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov)).

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