

Professor Darrell Abernethy:



I qualified as a veterinarian from the University of Pretoria, South Africa in 1985. I then worked in Northern Ireland as a state veterinarian and epidemiologist for the next 25 years apart from a 3-year aid contract in Botswana. Most of my work focused on the epidemiology of endemic and exotic animal diseases. I obtained a Master of Social Science from QUB, Belfast, and a post-graduate diploma and PhD in veterinary epidemiology from the RVC, London. In 2012 I returned to my alma mater serving as Head of the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases and as Dean of the Faculty. In 2018 I returned to research, focusing on animal and public health, but expanded in scope to include avian and ecosystem health and issues around rural poverty. In April 2020 I joined Aberystwyth University as founding head of its new veterinary school, the first of its kind in Wales and a joint venture with the RVC.

Presentation:

“Disease eradication, decision making and One Health in a risk-averse world”.

Synopsis:

We live in a data-rich era, with significant computational and statistical resources to interrogate the data. With such tools, one might think that evidence could be easily acquired to drive eradication of disease or address challenging issues in conservation. But this does not seem to be the case, from disease control to rhino poaching or hunting. Why is that? The answer is, of course, that evidence is only one factor influencing decision makers, and in a world of social media and influencers, making unpopular choices can move from difficult to impossible. We shall look at some examples, assess the impact of these decisions and ask if One Health can assist in moving forward.