Protecting Your Patients and Practice from Zoonotic Diseases

by Shawn Grubb, Director of Sales and Marketing, Andersen Products Inc.

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that can be transmitted from animals to people or, more specifically, a disease that normally exists in animals but that can infect humans. There are multitudes of zoonotic diseases including some well-known cases such as methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), salmonellosis, rabies, Q-fever, and toxoplasmosis just to name a few.

Zoonotic diseases are a threat to all veterinary practices, especially when combined with the phenomena of Hospital Acquired Infections (HAIs). HAI, also known as a nosocomial infection, is an infection that is acquired in a hospital or other health care facility. The Center for Disease Control estimate that over 90,000 Americas die each year from HAIs. This is a serious threat to your animal patients and their human owners.

With today’s ever-changing world of superbugs, it is becoming increasingly harder to prevent these zoonotic diseases from spreading. However, there are many veterinary hospitals that are still opting to merely disinfect their heat sensitive medical instruments. Unfortunately, disinfection methods are no longer good enough to kill all superbugs. For this you need a true sterilization process.

One standard of care that is widely used and is a very successful way for preventing the spread of such diseases is the use of ethylene oxide, or ETO. ETO sterilization is a method that has been used since the 1950’s and is currently the most popular method for sterilizing new medical devices. In fact, almost 60% of all OEM medical devices are sterilized with ETO.

Originally ETO gas was used in large and complex sterilization chambers to process large pallet loads of medical devices. Like most technologies ETO has evolved and improved over time. ETO is now available in tabletop systems that use as little as 17.5 grams of gas per cycle.

These modern ETO systems are practical, effective, and involve none of the risks associated with the early chamber systems. Tabletop ETO sterilizers are an affordable option for even the smallest of veterinary hospitals and practices. Another benefit of ETO is the fact that it is the most gentle sterilization method on the market and can extend the useful life of veterinarian’s expensive and delicate surgical instruments.

The proven reliability of ETO can be a powerful tool in the fight against superbugs. A modern tabletop ETO system allows veterinarians to give their patients and their practice the very best protection against zoonotic and other disease outbreaks.