

Environmental Sustainability Policy Guide

This resource is provided by Vet Sustain to enable veterinary practices to undertake their own environmental sustainability journey, championing sustainability across the veterinary professions.

Sections to include in your Environmental Sustainability Policy and guidance notes:

- PRACTICE NAME AND YEAR
- ABOUT YOU

Include here details about your practice, including practice name, species specialism(s), type of veterinary services provided, practice mission, vision, goals and values.

- YOUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

Write your own commitment statement bespoke to your business, or use the suggested one below:

'We support Vet Sustain's [veterinary sustainability goals](#). We acknowledge that our veterinary activities, services and operations have an impact on the environment and have identified key impacts related to our business that contribute to our environmental and carbon footprint. Through the implementation of this sustainability policy we will encourage wide reaching participation, working to reduce these impacts, whilst upholding the highest standards of animal health, welfare and clinical care for our patients.'

- KEY IMPACTS

Understand the impacts of your practice activities. You can measure the impact of your practice and help identify potential areas of impact using a carbon auditing tool such as the [Veterinary Carbon Calculator](#).

'Our practice carbon footprint is [insert figure] tonnes CO₂ per year.

We have identified the following key business activities that contribute to our overall environmental and carbon footprint:...

Here are some suggestions for you to consider:

- | | |
|---|---|
| ● <i>Use of fossil fuels (i.e. oil and gas usage)</i> | ● <i>Carbon emissions from staff & customer travel</i> |
| ● <i>Use of electricity</i> | ● <i>Consumption of raw materials (including prescribed drugs, medical plastics, needles)</i> |
| ● <i>Waste generation & disposal</i> | ● <i>Use of parasiticides</i> |
| ● <i>Use of anaesthetic gases</i> | ● <i>Use of antimicrobials</i> |
| ● <i>Use of water</i> | ● <i>Procurement of goods & services</i> |
| ● <i>Carbon emissions from transport of personnel & animals</i> | |
| ● <i>Carbon emissions from fleet vehicles</i> | |

Environmental Sustainability Policy Guide

● ACTIONS

Clearly identify where you are going to take action: 'Having identified the key environmental impacts of our practice, we commit to reducing these through a journey of continual improvement. **By utilising the following principles of the Vet Sustain Greener Veterinary Practice Checklist, we pledge to contribute to a healthy environment for our employees and patients through the following actions:...**'

Highlight 2-3 key actions you will undertake under each heading to create your action plan, there are some suggestions below but you should personalise these to you.

1. Practise responsible resource use:

Examples include: monitoring key resources such as electricity, gas, water and setting targets for reduction; put water-saving measures in place; reduce use of disposable materials such as single use plastics; go paper-free; make sustainable choices when purchasing equipment/consumables; review and optimise waste management implementing the 3Rs (reduce, re-use, recycle); review staff travel and transport. Please note - the RCVS PSS requires a clear waste reduction and recycling plan.

2. Be sustainable in our operation:

Examples include: promote animal welfare; create a travel policy to reduce emissions associated with commuting/business travel; support greener transport to work (e.g. bike to work scheme); reduce carbon emissions from practice meetings/conference attendance; review anaesthetic gas use and set targets for reduction; encourage responsible use of medicines; encourage responsible disposal of medicines; consider eco-design/building adaptations where possible; ensure environmental legislation compliance; use evidence-based infection control measures and minimise use of eco-toxic chemicals; enhance on-site green spaces and promote biodiversity in surroundings; support environmentally responsible, welfare friendly animal care amongst clients and the wider community.

3. Use medicines responsibly:

Examples include: practise responsible use of medicines; avoid drug wastage through good stock control; encourage appropriate drug disposal among staff and clients.

4. Empower the team:

Examples include: Convey sustainability policy to the whole team and encourage continued participation by all team members; access sustainability focused forums and training; recognise that good health and wellbeing supports all aspects of practice operations.

5. Create a green group/green lead.

● TARGETS

Set targets for what you hope to achieve. For example: 'We [insert practice name] pledge to reducing our environmental impact through a journey of continual improvement and [e.g. reduce our carbon emissions by 10% in the next 2 years] and through our commitment to the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Practice Standards Accreditation Scheme Sustainability Award*.'

[*include other accreditation schemes e.g. Investors in the Environment, as appropriate]

Make sure your actions & targets are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant & time-bound).

● COMMUNICATION

Ensure you clearly communicate your policy to all stakeholders including staff, clients and suppliers & encourage feedback and participation from all, including details of where the policy can be viewed.

Having it easily accessible on the practice website is encouraged. The policy should be signed by someone in the senior management team to show your practice's commitment and updated regularly.

Use the Vet Sustain Environmental Sustainability Policy Template to get started.