

Veterinary practice can no longer COP-out

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Increasingly, environmental issues are in the veterinary headlines — and as global leaders meet in Glasgow for COP26, we can all reflect on what we can do at an organisational and personal level to tackle threats to the global environment. There are now regular, inspiring reports in the veterinary press on what individuals, practices or corporate groups are doing to reduce waste, limit carbon emissions or promote biodiversity.

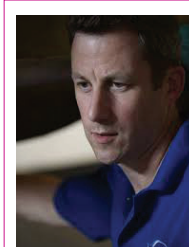
In September, the editors of human and veterinary healthcare journals published a call to arms for the healthcare sector, highlighting the impact that climate change was having on health (<https://bit.ly/3w9Ia2i>). Changes in global temperatures will impact on many areas in which veterinary professionals are key, such as public health, infectious disease spread, farming practices and food production.

In April of this year, the RCVS joined with a number of other veterinary organisations from across the world to endorse a series of pledges developed by the World Veterinary Association to combat climate change. An RCVS Environment and Sustainability Working Party was established this time last year to develop policies, both internally for the RCVS and more widely for the profession through our regulatory mechanisms. The RCVS will be joining other health professionals, through membership of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, to make recommendations concerning potential new environmental and sustainability initiatives. The RCVS working party will, through the Advancement of the Professions Committee, make recommendations to RCVS Council. It is therefore likely that it is only a matter of time before practices have to demonstrate their environmental credentials to be able to attain RCVS accreditations.

Even the concept of pet ownership is coming under scrutiny, with suggestions that pets are an unnecessary source of carbon. The horse industry has thus far avoided the spotlight that repeatedly shines on the carbon emissions associated with ruminants, but it is surely only a matter of time before we are called to justify the need for keeping our soya consuming, carbon emitting, invertebrate killing, soil eroding equestrian companions. The excesses associated with equestrianism are highlighted in two articles in this edition of *UK-Vet Equine* that focus on equine obesity. In an article on autumn de-worming, I also urge restraint in the use of ecotoxic anthelmintics at this time of year and encourage a risk assessment to balance the needs of the individual with the needs of the population and the wider environment. The issues associated with parasiticide use have been brought into sharp focus by the recent publication of the BVA, BSAVA and BVZS policy position on responsible use of parasiticides for cats and dogs (<https://bit.ly/3w8bdTI>).

VetSustain (<https://vetsustain.org/about>) has been championing veterinary involvement in sustainability since its foundation in 2019, to unite veterinary professionals in moving towards a more sustainable future for all. They aim to have sustainability policies in place in 50% of practices by 2025. Does yours have one yet? Focusing specifically on equine practice, BEVA have recently developed a sustainability working group under the leadership of Tim Mair, and are encouraging each practice to have a sustainability champion who can engage with the BEVA initiative. So get involved!

Hopefully the rising tides are being replaced by a growing tide of public and professional opinion that is moving us toward a more sustainable and biodiverse future. By the time this hits the press, we will know whether our global leaders have been listening! Irrespective of what they decide, our profession should be leading by example.



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