



**Vet  
Sustain  
Championing  
Sustainability  
In The Veterinary  
Professions**

**Strategic Plan 2020–2025**

Updated April 2021

# Vet Sustain Strategic Plan 2020-2025

## SUMMARY

The world is facing a multitude of complex and pressing sustainability challenges including climate change, biodiversity depletion and public health pandemics that present existential threats to human civilisation and the natural world. The IPCC,<sup>1</sup> IPBES<sup>2</sup> and the wider scientific community warn that transformative changes are urgently required to limit the catastrophic consequences of climate change and ecological collapse.<sup>1,2</sup> Zoonoses account for the majority of new infectious diseases impacting human health,<sup>3</sup> and animal welfare problems persist in domestic animals as a result of entrenched practices in our pursuit of companionship and animal-source foods. These crises demand a robust and urgent response, together with a fundamental and sustained shift in our behaviours at a personal and societal level.

Veterinary professionals and members of the vet-led team occupy an extraordinary niche at the animal-human-environment interface, and as recognised in the Vet Futures and VN Futures reports, deliver a wide range of sustainability services to society.<sup>4</sup> Examples of these services include upholding animal welfare, reducing waste in food chains associated with livestock disease, supporting wildlife health and conservation, and reducing the risk to public health of antimicrobial resistance, through responsible medicine use.

However, as veterinary professionals and members of the vet-led team, we also hold an opportunity to use our skills as multi-disciplinary scientists and our position of trust<sup>5</sup> to leverage change towards a more sustainable future, for our own professions, for the sectors we influence and for wider society. We believe the veterinary professions should assume a leadership role in addressing some of the most pressing sustainability issues of our time.

Vet Sustain was established as a group of volunteers in October 2019, to champion sustainability in our professions. We have since built an online network of 2000 veterinary professionals. We have convened three technical Working Groups who have made progress towards developing a veterinary practice sustainability toolkit, curriculum guide for veterinary schools, and initiated a regenerative agriculture programme for vets.

Our Strategic Plan lays out our roadmap for taking our volunteer group to the next level, by establishing Vet Sustain as a legal entity with a structure and funding plan that will allow us to deliver important initiatives in fulfilment of our 'Veterinary Sustainability Goals'. As a not-for-profit social enterprise, we will be managed by a small team of directors and will be dedicated to supporting our community (the veterinary professions) in a transition towards a more sustainable future. We will deliver our work through our dedicated Working Groups, champions, social network, partners and a coalition of supporting organisations.

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<sup>1</sup>The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2018) Global Warming of 1.5°C. [online] Available from: [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15\\_Headline-statements.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/SR15_Headline-statements.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) (2019) Nature's Dangerous Decline 'Unprecedented'; Species Extinction Rates 'Accelerating' [online] Available from: <https://ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, L. H., Latham, S. M. & Woolhouse, M. E. J. Risk factors for human disease emergence. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. Lond. B* **358**, 983–989 (2001).

<sup>4</sup> BVA & RCVS (2015) Taking charge of our future: A vision for the veterinary profession for 2030 [online] Available from: <https://www.vetfutures.org.uk/resource/vet-futures-report/>

<sup>5</sup> Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (2019) Vets amongst the most trusted professionals, according to survey <https://www.rcvs.org.uk/news-and-views/news/vets-amongst-the-most-trusted-professionals-according-to-rcvs/>



## VISION

Our vision is for the veterinary professions to be enabled as **leading forces for sustainability**



## MISSION

Our mission is to **enable and inspire veterinary professionals to continually improve the health and wellbeing of animals, people and the environment**



## GOALS

*See page 3 for a detailed description of our 'Veterinary Sustainability Goals' and their relevance to the UN's SDGs.*

### 1. DIVERSE AND ABUNDANT WILDLIFE

To conserve and enhance natural landscapes, habitats and biological diversity and abundance of wild terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species

### 2. A GOOD LIFE FOR ANIMALS

Safeguard and advocate for the health and welfare in life and at the point of death of animals under our care and those that are affected by human activity

### 3. NET ZERO WARMING

Implement and promote decarbonisation through energy efficiency, the generation and use of renewable energy, mitigation of global heating and sequestration of carbon

### 4. HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Safeguard and enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of people and support a transition to livelihoods and lifestyles that are fit for the future

### 5. A NO-WASTE SOCIETY

Minimise the usage and disposal of resources and materials and support a transition to a circular economy

### 6. ENOUGH CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

Uphold best practice in fresh water conservation and protection to mitigate water stress and prevent water pollution



# THE VETERINARY SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

Vet Sustain has compiled the following six Veterinary Sustainability Goals to highlight the roles of veterinary professionals in driving sustainability, and to unite our professions around the goals and actions required to address multiple challenges facing our society. Examples of the actions our professions can undertake and advocate are shown in *italics* beneath each goal.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are “the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all...addressing the global challenges we face, including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice” (UN, 2020). The veterinary professions are uniquely placed at the human-animal-environment interface to address the SDGs, in our own work including in practice, policy, research, academia, government, non-governmental organisations and industry, and also in the sectors we influence, through the animals under our care. The following goals and actions provide a framework for our professions for contributing to the UN's SDGs.

## THE VETERINARY SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

## THE UN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

### DIVERSE AND ABUNDANT WILDLIFE

Conserve and enhance natural landscapes, habitats and biological diversity and abundance of wild terrestrial and aquatic plant and animal species



- o *Conserving and creating wildlife habitats*
- o *Preserving and regenerating high conservation-value landscapes*
- o *Mitigating water, air and light pollution*
- o *Supporting wildlife health and conservation programmes*
- o *Understanding the merits and trade-offs in land-sharing and land-sparing approaches in human activities*
- o *Developing and promoting diverse food and farming systems that work in harmony with and restore natural ecosystems*
- o *Supporting where appropriate alternative protein-based diets for humans and animals*
- o *Promoting sustainable sourcing of feed ingredients and reducing dependence on human-edible feedstuffs for animals*



### A GOOD LIFE FOR ANIMALS

Safeguard and advocate for the health and welfare, in life and at the point of death, of animals under our care and those that are affected by human activity



- o *Advocating animal welfare as a core sustainability objective, as a hallmark of our social progress*
- o *Ensuring recognition of animal sentience in policy and practice*
- o *Advocating the use of sustainable breeding practices and genetics*
- o *Supporting animal welfare-centred husbandry and management, including stimulating living environments to permit highly motivated behaviours*
- o *Ensuring humane slaughter and transport*
- o *Supporting the phase-out of mutilations*
- o *Advocating for wildlife welfare (e.g. opposing wildlife trade, cruel sports, marine animal entanglement, ocean plastic pollution, habitat loss)*



### NET ZERO WARMING

Implement and promote decarbonisation through energy efficiency, the generation and use of renewable energy, mitigation of global warming and sequestration of carbon



- o *Developing climate literacy within our profession*
- o *Understanding and mitigating the climate impacts of veterinary activities, agriculture and animal ownership*
- o *Using and generating renewable energy*
- o *Sequestering carbon*



### HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Safeguard and enhance the physical and mental wellbeing of people and support a transition to livelihoods and lifestyles that are fit for the future



- o *Supporting food and nutritional security for all*
- o *Mitigating antimicrobial resistance*
- o *Reducing risk of zoonoses*
- o *Improving food safety and quality*
- o *Upholding human rights*
- o *Identifying and mitigating domestic and animal abuse*
- o *Ensuring diversity and inclusion*
- o *Supporting mental health and wellbeing*
- o *Optimising the health benefits of animal ownership*
- o *Supporting sustainable livelihoods in our profession and in the sectors we influence*
- o *Promoting sustainable lifestyles*



### A NO-WASTE SOCIETY

Minimise the usage and disposal of resources and materials, and support a transition to a circular economy



- o *Supporting a circular economy*
- o *Reducing food waste from farm-to-fork*
- o *Reducing the wastage of resources and its impacts on ecosystems and landscapes*
- o *Minimising plastic waste by reusing and recycling materials where possible*
- o *Reducing medical waste whilst upholding infection control*
- o *Understanding supply chains*



### ENOUGH CLEAN WATER FOR ALL

Uphold best practice in fresh water conservation and protection to mitigate water stress and prevent water pollution



- o *Conserving and recycling water in the workplace*
- o *Understanding and mitigating medicine ecotoxicity*
- o *Supporting the conservation and recycling of water in agriculture*
- o *Protecting waterways from pollution*
- o *Supporting soil health and management*





## OBJECTIVES

1. To build an online network of **5,000 veterinary professionals** by 2020
2. To promote and support the integration of sustainability topics<sup>‡</sup> in to the curriculum of **all UK veterinary schools** by 2022
3. To promote and support the integration of sustainability<sup>‡</sup> in to the **policy and standards of the key UK veterinary associations and institutions** by 2025
4. To promote and support the integration of sustainability<sup>‡</sup> policy and practices in to **>50% of UK veterinary practices** by 2025
5. To equip **veterinary professionals and vet-led businesses** with the tools to support uptake of sustainability<sup>‡</sup> policy and practices in the **sectors we influence** through the animals under our care, by 2025

<sup>‡</sup> Vet Sustain defines 'sustainability' as the elements included in our Veterinary Sustainability Goals



## SCOPE

We are an organisation dedicated to supporting **veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and all members of the veterinary team**, to drive sustainability in their roles within the professions, and in the sectors they influence.



## STRATEGIES

### ENABLEMENT

#### *Through the development of tools*

- **To generate toolkits and reference materials**, based upon peer-reviewed and current science where it exists, to enable members of the professions and vet-led team to adopt sustainability principles and practices in their working lives and support the sectors we influence in a transition to sustainable animal care;
- **To create a veterinary curriculum guide** to enable UK veterinary schools to align in incorporating sustainability topics in to their curricula.

#### *Through training*

- **To educate** veterinary professionals via a regular webinar series, events and training courses featuring network members and external thought-leaders and experts on sustainability topics [NB. online training will be prioritised to limit environmental impacts and maximise participation].

### INSPIRATION

#### *Through communication*

- **To engage veterinary professionals, members of the veterinary team and interested individuals** through a regular email newsletter, blogs and articles, case studies and stories from the professions;
- **To generate discussion, and motivate and celebrate positive action** amongst veterinary professionals through a Facebook group 'Veterinary Sustainability Forum', highlighting emerging topics, events and initiatives;
- **To boost the visibility** of the veterinary professions as agents of sustainability via a public Facebook page.

#### *Through advocacy*

- **To advocate veterinary leadership** in sustainability issues, for example by launching awareness campaigns;
- **To advocate policy uptake and local action** in the professions via Vet Sustain directors, Working Group members and a Champions network.



## OUR VALUES

**We are bold:** We are not afraid to challenge norms and drive new solutions to pressing challenges

**We are kind:** We are respectful and open to new ideas in our interactions with each other and the wider community

**We are positive:** We are solutions-orientated and constructive in our dialogue

**We are scientific:** We refer to peer-reviewed and current science where it exists to progress our ideas

**We are non-judgemental:** We do not judge the actions of others and recognise our individual differences in culture and circumstance. We do not blame or shame. We allow and support individuals, communities and businesses to change.



## ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & FUNDING

Vet Sustain will register as a **Community Interest Company (Limited Company by Guarantee)** in 2020 to provide structure and accountability, to allow Vet Sustain's work to continue as a distinct legal personality from its directors, and to attract funding.

This social enterprise legal structure has been selected because it provides a small and agile structure and ensures that all profits generated by the organisation are used to further its objectives in serving its community, without the motive of making a profit for distribution to members. Vet Sustain's community is the global veterinary professions, and therefore all of our activities will be underpinned by our commitment to support vets and members of the vet-led team to work towards a more sustainable future.

**Vet Sustain Directors** are also its members, and this board of individuals are tasked with governing the strategic delivery and financial integrity of Vet Sustain, and ensuring that we meet the regulations of the Office of the Regulator of Community Interest Companies. Our governance ensures that all proposals need to pass with 'no objection' by the Directors in order to be progressed. It is expected that Vet Sustain's Directors will be supported by a team in due course.

Vet Sustain also invites members of the professions to form **Vet Sustain Working Groups**. These Working Groups are self-governed, and direct initiatives on key work streams in the name of Vet Sustain and with support from the organisation following an agreement that the Working Groups fulfil an area within the Veterinary Sustainability Goals, and objective(s) within Vet Sustain's Strategic Plan. This decentralisation approach allows the technical areas of Vet Sustain's Strategic Plan to be fulfilled by individuals with the necessary experience and expertise, ensures full participation of stakeholders from the professions in line with the requirements of CICs, and facilitates effective delivery of Vet Sustain's objectives. One or more Directors will sit on these Working Groups to ensure alignment. Packages of funding will be made available to the Working Groups for agreed outputs that will serve the wider veterinary community.

Vet Sustain will form **partnerships** with organisations with shared objectives and with which we can deliver defined projects and initiatives through our Working Groups and Directors. Partnership agreements may entail ring-fenced funding for Vet Sustain's work or in-kind support in the delivery of projects.

Vet Sustain will appoint a **network of Champions** from across the professions, to provide an opportunity for deeper engagement with individuals and to support local action. Champions will receive a package of in-kind support from Vet Sustain e.g. training and resources for spearheading local projects and will be recognised in Vet Sustain's communications. A number of high-profile Ambassadors from our professions will also be recruited to champion our cause. Packages of funding may be offered to Champions via a competitive process for small local initiatives.

Our **network** will consist of veterinary professionals and interested individuals that can engage with our work via our Facebook Page, monthly newsletters and free training and resources (e.g. free webinars). Members of the professions are able to join our closed Facebook Group for professional and constructive discussion. Our

network will be an important interface with the community to ensure Vet Sustain’s activities are effectively serving the needs of the professions.

## **Funding and delivering our work**

A diverse income portfolio is envisaged to allow Vet Sustain to become self-sufficient as a social enterprise/CIC. Vet Sustain will generate revenue through its activities, work with partners to deliver our outputs, and attract financial support from a coalition of organisations.

### **SALES**

Opportunities to generate revenue will include sales of certain resources, training and events. However, we will work to ensure that a package of core resources are freely available to all to maximise uptake, participation and impact.

### **PARTNERS**

Partnerships will be sought with organisations with shared objectives, and with which we can deliver defined projects and initiatives. Partnership agreements may entail ring-fenced funding for Vet Sustain’s work or in-kind support in the delivery of projects.

### **COALITION OF SUPPORTERS**

Unrestricted financial support will be sought from a range of organisations. Through their support, supporters will be investing in the work that Vet Sustain undertakes for veterinary professionals and members of the vet-led team.

We believe progress is best made as a “broad church”, and as such we welcome affiliations with all forms of organisation that share our intention to make meaningful progress, from a variety of baselines.

Through a process of due diligence, Vet Sustain will ensure that it receives financial support from organisations that share our goals for the veterinary professions and can commit to working towards delivering these in their work. The non-exclusive contractual relationships will allow Vet Sustain to continue its work with independence and impartiality, and in return, those organisations that partner with or support Vet Sustain will benefit from being part of a progressive coalition, receiving access to Vet Sustain resources, and being recognised in Vet Sustain’s communications.



## ACTION PLAN

OBJECTIVE	KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTCOME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY OF / PARTNER(S) INVOLVED	TIMELINE
1. Establish Vet Sustain's organisational structure and funding streams	Registration as a legal entity  Directors appointed  Number of Working Groups established  Revenue	Vet Sustain is registered as a legal entity  Directors are in position  Working Groups have established workplans  Funding streams secured	1.1 Appoint <b>directors</b> 1.2 <b>Register</b> as a CIC 1.3 Establish <b>bank account</b> 1.4 <b>Working Groups</b> provide workplans 1.5 Potential <b>supporters and partners</b> are approached and funding/resources are secured	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors</li> <li>Working Groups</li> </ul>	2020
2. To build an online network of <b>5,000 veterinary professionals</b> by 2020	Number of members of Vet Sustain Facebook group/forums  Number of Champions	Veterinary professionals are equipped to integrate sustainability principles and practices in to their working lives	1.1 Establish & build <b>Facebook group</b> (forum) with monthly themes, news, initiatives and network engagement pieces ✓ 1.2 Establish <b>Facebook public page</b> ✓ 1.3 Establish <b>Twitter</b> feed ✓ 1.4 Establish <b>LinkedIn</b> group ✓ 1.5 Launch <b>Webinar</b> series ✓ 1.6 Establish monthly <b>e-newsletter</b> ✓ 1.7 Create a network of <b>Champions</b> (representatives or promoters of a specified activity) across the professions to advocate policy uptake by practices/vet schools and implement local projects 1.8 Regular <b>monthly articles</b> in the veterinary press ✓ 1.9 <b>Climate emergency</b> declaration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors</li> <li>Champions</li> <li>Partners</li> </ul>	2020 +
3. To promote and support the integration of sustainability topics in to the curriculum of <b>all UK veterinary schools</b> by 2022	Number of vet schools with curricula featuring sustainability teaching around our 6 goals	Veterinary graduates are equipped to integrate sustainability principles and practices in to their working lives	3.1 Conduct a <b>baseline assessment and gap analysis</b> of current sustainability curricula at UK vet schools featuring teaching around our 6 goals 3.2 Develop <b>Curriculum Guides</b> for integration of sustainability in to vet school curricula, and facilitate access to toolkits for use as teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directors</li> <li>Vet School Curriculum Working Group</li> <li>Champions</li> </ul>	2020-2022

4. To promote and support the integration of sustainability in to the policy and standards of the <b>key UK veterinary associations and institutions</b> by 2025	Number of veterinary associations/institutions with sustainability policy/standards incorporating the 6 goals	Veterinary institutions lead by example on the integration of sustainability policies and standards in to their operations	<p>4.1 Identify <b>representatives/key contacts</b> for Vet Sustain within each association/ institution</p> <p>4.2 Conduct a <b>baseline assessment and gap analysis</b> of current sustainability policies and activities undertaken by the associations/institutions around our 6 goals</p> <p>4.3 Develop our Vet Sustain <b>recommendations</b> for integration of sustainability policy and standards in to the vet associations/institutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors</li> <li>• Representatives from associations/ institutions</li> <li>• Specialist divisions</li> </ul>	2020-2025
5. To promote and support the integration of sustainability policy and practices in to <b>&gt;50% of UK veterinary practices</b> by 2025	<p>Percentage of UK veterinary practices adopting sustainability policies featuring the 6 goals</p> <p>Number of toolkit downloads</p>	Veterinary businesses adopt sustainable practices in to their operations and reduce their environmental footprint	<p>5.1 Conduct a <b>baseline assessment and gap analysis</b> of sustainability policies and practices in veterinary practices across the UK</p> <p>5.2 Build a <b>Toolkit</b> of resources for vet practices to support the integration of sustainability policy and practices in to the workplace</p> <p>5.3 Scope out and implement vet practice incentivisation schemes alongside relevant partners, for example, <b>Sustainability Awards</b> or a sustainability pledge campaign</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directors</li> <li>• Vet practice toolkit Working Group</li> <li>• Partners (TBC)</li> <li>• Associations/ institutions</li> </ul>	2020 - 2025
6. To equip <b>veterinary professionals and vet-led businesses</b> with the tools to support uptake of sustainability policy and practices in the <b>sectors we influence</b> through the animals under our care, by 2025	<p>Number of Toolkits developed</p> <p>Number of toolkit downloads</p>	Veterinary professionals and vet-led businesses are equipped to advise on sustainability issues in the sectors we engage with	<p>6.1 Identify delivery partners for Toolkits</p> <p>6.2 Build a series of electronic <b>'Toolkits'</b> of 'how to' content for vets, containing solutions to meet our goals (e.g. regenerative agriculture, medicine use and the environment, sustainable pet ownership)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and Farming Working Group</li> <li>• Other Working Groups</li> <li>• Partners (TBC)</li> </ul>	2020 - 2025

#### Other References

Icons used in this document are from The Noun Project: Vision by Symbolon, mission by trang5000, goals by Deemak Daksina, objectives by Barracuda, scope by Akbar azis, strategies by Humantech, values by Makinshine, organisation by Adiba Taj and action plan by Prasad.