

Minster Equine Sustainability Newsletter



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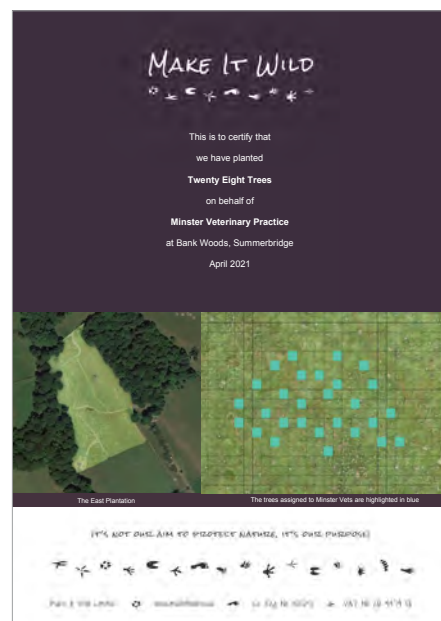
Welcome to our first sustainability newsletter!
 In this inaugural edition we revisit the sustainability initiatives we have implemented at the Minster Equine Veterinary Practice and outline our goals for improving our sustainability in 2022.

Tree planting

We started off in January 2021 with a New Year’s resolution to improve sustainability and reduce our carbon footprint at the practice. One of the initiatives we ran was to plant a new tree for every new client we gained during January and February. In total, we managed to plant 28 new trees!

These trees were planted for us by local business ‘Make it Wild’ in their nature reserve in Summerbridge, Harrogate. Alongside the tree planting, they also run a rewilding project on the reserve, where six Exmoor ponies play their part in conservation grazing. The Exmoor ponies perform a vital role in spreading wildflower seed, trampling the ground and maintaining paths through the gorse.

Another way in which we have helped to plant trees is by using a search engine called ‘Ecosia’ at the practice. This search engine generates income via search advertising, and uses this income to plant trees in different areas around the world.



Plants and wildlife

In addition to tree planting we made some positive changes at our practices. We are taking care of the local wildlife by providing bird feeders, and have been busy planting bee-friendly flowers for our tubs and hanging baskets along with planting early spring flowering bulbs.

We have also started composting our food waste from our communal kitchen area. We use plastic free tea bags at the practice so we are able to compost these along with any fruit and veg food waste. This all goes into our compost bin along with any grass cuttings to use in our flower pots and hanging baskets.

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Waste and recycling

Starting to recycle our non-contaminated glass, plastic, paper and cardboard has been a big change for the practice in the last year. We have reduced the number of general waste for landfill collections by over half, and have been able to recycle all of our shredded paper, cardboard boxes, plastic and glass bottles instead of them heading to landfill or incineration.

Our vets and nursing assistants have also begun to carefully separate any waste from the clinic and from the vet's cars so that we don't needlessly send any non-contaminated waste for incineration as clinical or offensive waste. Any non-contaminated items are separated so that paper and plastic can be recycled appropriately. We also use biodegradable bin bags for any waste that will go to landfill.

You may have noticed that we no longer dispense any medications in plastic bags. We made the change to paper bags in 2021 in order to cut down our single use plastic waste.

Terracycle Zero Waste boxes

We now have three types of Terracycle boxes at our practices. These are plastic packaging, non-contaminated PPE and medicine blister packs. If your horse is on any medication that comes in a blister pack, such as medication for Cushing's disease, you can return the empty blister packs to us at either of our practices, or give them to your vet at the yard, and we will recycle them for free! Once full, the boxes, which are themselves recyclable, are collected by TerraCycle and separated into individual components for recycling.

Energy and water

Our practices do not use gas and so our heat and power comes from electricity. One of the biggest changes we've made has been changing our electricity supply to electricity from renewable sources.

We have also made an effort to save clean water. We installed two water butts for rainwater harvesting from the stable roofs, and we use this water for watering the plants and hanging baskets around the practice. We have also installed water saving water displacement bags in some of the toilets - every bag installed could save up to 2 litres per flush..

Fuel

As a lot of our vet's time is spent out on the road driving to your stables, fuel accounts for a large proportion of our carbon footprint. In 2021 we introduced a new local visit fee for clients within a 5-10 mile radius of the practice. We now have two competitively priced local visit fees to cover the areas closest to our practices, as well as our free yard visit scheme for yards with 5 or more horses to be seen. We also offer a free routine visit for yards that have a regular visit at set intervals. The visit schemes really help us to reduce the amount of fuel we use and as an added bonus also save you money! If you are interested in setting up a yard visit, please contact us for more information. We can provide free branded whiteboards to help you organise veterinary care between you and others at your yard.



Bedding, forage and feed

We use recycled cardboard bedding at the practice, made from shredded cardboard boxes. Not only is the bedding recycled, it is dust-free and inedible, so suitable for most of our patients staying over at the clinic. It's also 100% compostable/biodegradable. We also source our hay and haylage from local suppliers, meaning that the environmental impact from transportation is as low as possible.

We save any plastic feed bags to use as bin bags, or they make great hanging basket liners! Our own range of calming and gastric ulcer support supplements come in recyclable plastic tubs, but they can also be re-used for other purposes.

Medications

As a veterinary surgery, it is obvious that a large proportion of our waste comes from medication, whether that is from the packaging it's delivered in, or from disposing of used bottles, syringes and needles. An unavoidable part of having medication in stock is having drugs that aren't used up quickly enough and therefore go out of date and into the clinical waste bins for incineration. This year we have embarked on a stock control project which helps aid us in reducing this kind of waste. The result of this means that we are now better able to accurately predict how much medication needs to be stocked to avoid unnecessary waste.

Antimicrobial and anthelmintic use

In recent years there has been a lot of press surrounding the sustainable use of deworming products and antibiotics. At the Minster Equine Veterinary Practice we have policies surrounding the appropriate use of these medications in order to protect them from developing resistance.

Antibiotics

The World Health Organisation classifies certain antibiotics as critically important antibiotics for human use. When these antibiotics are used in animals, there is a higher risk to humans of the development of antibiotic resistance. Antimicrobial resistance is a global public health concern in both humans and animals.

Our aim is to reduce the use of antibiotics that might contribute to the development of further resistance. We aim to do this by only using highest priority critically important antibiotics (HP-CIA's) where other first line antibiotics are inappropriate or ineffective, using laboratory tests (culture and sensitivity) to determine which antibiotics will be appropriate or effective for treatment, and justifying the use of HP-CIA's in the clinical notes for any case in which they are used. We only use an HP-CIA when continued resistance to other antibiotics/treatment is demonstrated.

Inappropriate use of antibiotics can also increase resistance. You should always ensure that if your horse is prescribed antibiotics that you follow the vet's guidance fully and never cut short or lower the amount prescribed. Doing so can mean that the antibiotic isn't present for long enough to kill all of the bacteria, or doesn't reach the correct concentration required, leading to resistance. Handling antimicrobials inappropriately may also increase your own resistance to certain antibiotics, so always make sure that you take care not to expose yourself to low doses by accident and always wear gloves when handling them.

Keeping horses healthy is key to reducing the need for

antibiotic treatments. Good stable and field management is one of the most important factors in reducing antibiotic use, as well as using preventative healthcare methods such as vaccination programmes and horse health plans.

Anthelmintics (dewormers)

Targeted worming is the best practice for reducing resistance to deworming products. By performing regular worm egg counts and tapeworm tests, it ensures that only those horses that have worms are treated, and therefore the worms are less likely to become resistant to the products we have available.

Reducing dewormer use also reduces the environmental contamination caused by droppings from horses treated with dewormers on the pasture. This has adverse effects on insect populations, including the dung beetle. Dung beetles play an important role in improving pasture by burrowing into the soil, allowing nutrients and rainwater to soak into the ground, thereby improving the grass and reducing soil erosion. They are also an important food source for birds and small mammals.

Our aim is to reduce the use of deworming products that might contribute to the development of further resistance by developing targeted deworming plans, providing diagnostic tests to detect worm burdens, giving appropriate advice to clients, and educating and providing up-to-date information to our clients on best practises for deworming horses.



Goals for 2022

Investors in the environment

In 2022 we will be doing even more to increase sustainability at the practice. Our main focus is to achieve the 'Investors in the Environment' Bronze accreditation level. To achieve this we will need to:

- Have an environmental policy in place
- Appoint an environmental champion
- Monitor gas, electricity and water use
- Monitor use of one other resource
- Take quarterly resource readings
- Set targets for improved energy efficiency
- Have an action plan in place
- Have a recycling system in place
- Present progress annually, and submit evidence pack for assessment

One of our major goals will be to reduce our paper use. A large part of this will be achieved by reducing the number of paper invoices sent out. If you would like to sign up to receive email invoices and statements instead of paper ones by post, please let us know by emailing poppleton@minstervets.co.uk or fill out the form on our website.



We will also be joining the bee-friendly practice scheme, planting at least 1m² plot in the practice grounds with flowering plants that will attract pollinating bees. Alongside this we will be taking part in Plantlife's 'No Mow May', letting the wildflowers in our lawned areas bloom in order to provide nectar for pollinating insects.



If you would like to make any suggestions on how we can improve our sustainability as a practice, please email poppleton@minstervets.co.uk. We'd also love to hear your feedback on our efforts to 'go green'!

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