

Environmental sustainability, veterinary professionals and mental well-being

There is no reasonable doubt that our planet is facing and experiencing catastrophic environmental crises. Costello et al (2009) stated that climate change is the greatest threat to global human health. This crisis has been created by higher income countries and yet less affluent countries are impacted the most. It is imperative that we make changes for environmental sustainability, in all aspects of our lives, and that we make these changes now.

We have a moral responsibility as individuals, and as a profession, for the planet and all those that inhabit it. We must be good ancestors and consider the impact of our day-to-day activities upon future generations. Businesses not only have a social, environmental and moral responsibility to embrace sustainability practises: it is also essential for business resilience and provision of outstanding veterinary care into the future.

Mental wellbeing in the veterinary community importantly receives attention. As professionals, we have a great burden to deal with already, especially with the pandemic, and fully opening our eyes to the environmental crises may seem like too much to bear. However, awareness and engagement with the sustainability agenda, affords many benefits, including supporting team members already expressing concern. It is well documented that businesses with good environmental credentials have improved recruitment, wellbeing and retention of team members, in addition to being desirable to clients (Deluty et al., 2021). These are yet further reasons why your management team, or you as a manager, should be receptive to sustainability initiatives.

Eco-anxiety

Eco-anxiety is a chronic fear of emotional and ecological disaster that is not irrational and must not be denounced in particular

when contemplating the recent and ongoing environmental disasters faced globally and in particular in the Global South the counsellor or friend who offers reassurance to the person affected with anxiety about the environmental crises does nothing to allay their worries in fact it may heighten the stress that can be done it is important to focus on the things you can do so effectively and engage with the issues we face as a result of changes in your day-to-day life and connect with like-minded people and allies in your life and work with your values.

Sustainability and health care

The veterinary team has a unique perspective on animal human and environmental health and it is not surprising that vets are personally engaged with environmental matters. Survey documented that veterinary professionals wanted to embrace sustainability in the profession whilst this is the general feeling of the profession it is uncomfortable to recognise that our daily clinical activities have a high environmental impact. Healthcare without harm an environmental charity states that in healthcare here a country it could be the highest carbon emitter in the world. Healthcare is energy intensive reduces high carbon emissions procurements and generates high volumes of waste. For the sustainably minded member of the veterinary team there can be a cognitive dissonance experienced due to the mismatch between our explicit efforts to be plastic-free at home and the number of single-use items utilised in the clinic. Cognitive dissonance is the mental discomfort or holding two different beliefs values or attitudes in this instance adopting different attitudes in different environments.

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