

# Using energy and water responsibility

**Reducing your energy use is perhaps the single most important thing you can do to reduce the carbon footprint of your clinic....and whilst this might seem like a mammoth challenge, you can make a big impact through behaviour change, efficiency measures and choosing green suppliers.**

**The first step is being energy efficient...**

IT systems, diagnostic equipment, air conditioning, washing machines, fridges, freezers, lighting, and heating systems all consume a huge amount of energy which is often generated from fossil fuels, so it is important to use these efficiently; switch electrical equipment off when not in use (stand-by mode still drains electricity), choose eco-friendly electrical appliances with a high Energy Star rating and use eco-programmes. Replace old bulbs with LED lights which are around 70% more efficient and have a much longer lifespan, and ideally install PIR motion sensors too, particularly if the building is open 24/7. Implement a 'heating and cooling policy'; the air con should be set to no lower than 21°C and the heating should be set to no higher than 19°C. Installing TRV valves on radiators means you can better adjust the temperature in each room depending on its need. Structural energy efficiency measures in buildings such as triple glazing, draught proofing and insulation will all help to conserve heat and in turn, result in lower energy bills.

Tip: By measuring your energy use, you can then work out your carbon footprint using the Vet Sustain carbon calculator. Comparing emissions year on year allows you to measure

the impact of any green changes you make and benchmark your progress!

**What about green energy tariffs?**

The recent energy crisis has demonstrated just how damaging over-reliance on fossil fuels can be, both economically, politically, and environmentally. We should be looking to support renewable energy suppliers through green tariffs or generating energy on-site using heat pumps or solar panels.

**The carbon footprint of water....**

There is also a carbon footprint associated with supplying freshwater and treating wastewater, so water consumption is an important consideration in the clinic too. Coupled with the fact that water scarcity is an increasing concern, with parts of the UK already 'water stressed', we need to think about what actions we can take to ensure we are using water responsibly.

Aside from common-sense water saving measures such as tackling leaks ASAP, fitting cistern hippos and tap aerators, or running washing machines only on a full load, one important action in practice which can drastically reduce water use is using alcohol-based hand disinfection, such as Sterillium® instead of traditional scrubbing techniques with antiseptic soap. Sterillium® does not require water, nor generates the waste that might be associated with using hand towels or scrubbing brush use as with the traditional technique. An RCVS Knowledge Summary recently concluded that 'alcohol rubs provide similar, if not better, reductions in bacteria colony forming units, both immediately after hand antisepsis and in the immediate postoperative period', A. Mann, 2016. It only takes 90 seconds to achieve asepsis with Sterillium® too, therefore saving valuable surgeon time- a win-win!