IVC EVIDENSIA

The Positive Pawprint

Sustainability Report 2023

IVC EVIDENSIA POSITIVE PAWPRINT

A year in review

27
Positive Pawprint Partners

More than
41,000
IVC Evidensia colleagues

219
Local Community Grants awarded across nine countries

People

50:50
gender split for senior management roles

1,600
graduates enrolled in our international Graduate Academy programme since launch

Planet

85%
Group electricity from renewable sources

25
clinics in the Netherlands with solar panels

454kg
medical blister packs collected for recycling

17%
cut in UK crematorium process fuel emissions

Patients

5,021
animal lives saved using the IVC Evidensia Care Fund

870,000
members of pet health plans in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands

27%
reduction in total antibiotics used by our farm vets*

Over
9.7 million
animals treated each year

*From 2020 to 2022.

Contents

Overview

4 CEO introduction
5 About IVC Evidensia
6 Positive Pawprint strategy
7 Materiality and risk
8 Stakeholders
9 Embedding sustainability into our culture

11 Caring for People

13 Supported, engaged teams
14 Protecting and promoting the well-being of our teams
15 Building a strong learning culture
17 A diverse and inclusive workspace
21 High standards of health and safety
21 Human rights
22 Supporting local communities

24 Caring for the Planet

27 Managing our climate impacts
30 Responsible procurement
31 Resource efficiency
32 Promoting biodiversity

33 Caring for Patients

36 Caring for our customers
37 Professional governance and external affairs
37 Quality care for pets
40 Affordability and accessibility
41 Protecting patient welfare
43 Infection prevention and control (IPC)
46 Innovative health solutions

47 KPIs and targets

About this report

This is our third Positive Pawprint Report, detailing our environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) activities for the year 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023. This report was published in January 2024.

Policies and standards

Details of sustainability policies and standards can be found at the start of each section of this report. Our full suite of policies are reviewed regularly and can also be viewed on our website at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint.

In this report we reference the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) and the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). We also report against the SASB metrics for the Healthcare Distributors discipline.

Separate disclosures for TCFD and SASB are available at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint.

Your feedback
We welcome your comments and feedback on this report at positivepawprint@ivcevidensia.com

CEO introduction

Across IVC Evidensia, as a large international network, we embrace our responsibility to use our expertise, resources and financial strength to drive real and lasting change in the vital and fast-modernising veterinary profession.

We do this by concentrating all our efforts on delivering our purpose of **Healthy Animals, Happy Owners**.

To ensure everything we do helps deliver that purpose, we work to keep three promises: our people promise to be a great place to work; our customer promise of world-class veterinary care, delivered locally; and our sustainability promise to be a force for good, embodied in our Positive Pawprint strategy.

Positive Pawprint both defines and guides our efforts to make a positive impact on three key pillars of sustainability: **People**, **Planet** and **Patients**. This guides everything we are doing, and I wanted to pull out some of our key successes over the past year.

Caring for People

We want our people to enjoy coming to work every day, to be able to grow and flourish, and be themselves, supported by our significant investments in their working environments, salaries and benefits, including tens of millions in their ongoing professional development.

Underlining the importance of work/life balance, we introduced a successful Flexible Working Toolkit in the UK, laying the foundation for a more flexible work culture, which we are dedicated to expanding globally.

We want a truly representative workforce, and continue to nurture diversity and inclusion to help us both reflect and better understand the world around us. To that end, we continue to support ethnic diversity scholars financially, with development support, and by fostering a strong network across countries, and remain dedicated to gender equity. We are proud to have achieved gender parity in senior management roles this year and will continue to support women colleagues throughout their careers, whatever their role.

Caring for Patients

As the veterinary sector evolves at pace, we invest in ensuring our clinic and hospital teams have the equipment, training and ongoing support they need to navigate today's veterinary demands, while delivering patient care safely and to the highest quality.

We remain committed to quality improvement (QI), to help drive ever higher standards of animal care globally, such as through our QI portal, gathering together and sharing best practice and new approaches to drive continuous improvement across our clinics. We're equally committed to fighting antibiotic resistance specifically, supported by our growing numbers of Infection Prevention Control and Antibiotic Stewardship Ambassadors. In addition, our farm vets continue to set a leading example having delivered a reduction of over 27% in antibiotic use in a two-year period.

Affordability and accessibility of care remain vital, and nearly 900,000 clients use our pet health plans, helping avoid unexpected bills through regular check-ups and preventive treatments for a reasonable monthly cost. We continue to provide our Care Fund, saving over 5,000 lives in the last year, in instances when animal patients need life-saving care where finances are a challenge for owners.

Caring for our Planet

We are focused on playing our part in addressing key global environmental threats: climate change, biodiversity loss and resource depletion, and continue to embed responsible environmental management into our business strategy, investing time and resources into driving change within our business, supply chain and wider profession.

Continually reducing our impacts is a key aim, and we are committed to greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction targets aligned with climate science, validated by the Science Based Targets initiative. We are achieving this by making strides in renewable energy usage, through closer collaborations with key suppliers around efficiency and sustainable approaches, and by investing in energy-efficiency projects, such as our research into low carbon cremation techniques and anaesthesiology methods.

Embedding environmentally sustainable approaches across our varied network is a challenge, but it's one that our dedicated teams are passionate about delivering.

That's just a taste of the amazing work going on across our business. Please read on for much more.

Thanks to all our teams across the world for their ongoing dedication to supporting our sustainability efforts, as we work to become not only the best veterinary group IN the world, but also the best veterinary group FOR the world.

Simon Smith
GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Group CEO Simon Smith and Group COO Russell Trenter visiting our Spanish clinics earlier this year.

About IVC Evidensia

At IVC Evidensia our vision is to be the best veterinary group in the world.

Achieving our vision starts with everything we do being focused on our purpose – Healthy Animals, Happy Owners.

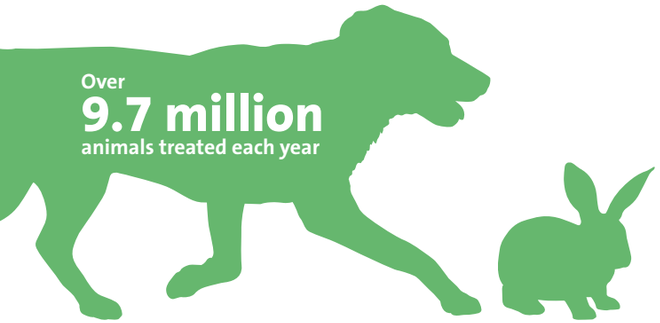
We have three, equally important, promises on which we focus our efforts, time and resources to ensure everything we do helps to deliver our purpose: our people promise to be a great place to work; our customer promise of world-class veterinary care, delivered locally; and our sustainability promise to be a force for good.

As important as what we do is how we do it. Our unique values – We Care, We Dare, We Share – guide us in how we want our people, customers, suppliers, partners and the wider world to experience IVC Evidensia, providing a framework for our actions and decisions.

Together, our purpose, promises and values help connect and inspire us as we continue on our journey to become the world's best veterinary group.

Our global scale

Founded in 2011, we've grown to become an expansive network of almost 2,500 clinics, hospitals and out-of-hours centres, with a presence across 20 countries.



We are currently the second-largest veterinary group in the world, and the largest in the UK and Europe. Our size and global scale enables us to invest for the benefit of our more than 41,000 people, the animals they care for, our customers and the planet.

Our scale also enables us to invest significantly into our systems, facilities and people – much more than any individual clinic or smaller business could ever do – to help ensure our people can sustainably deliver our purpose of Healthy Animals, Happy Owners.

Our commitment to our people

Whether it's providing career progression opportunities and training, improving work/life balance by hiring more vets and vet nurses, or providing ongoing well-being support and resources, we're able to invest at scale in our clinical staff to improve consumer choice, clinical innovation and community support.

To help our people focus their time on animal care, we centrally provide support with a broad range of time-consuming non-clinical and administration activities, while investing in premises, equipment, training, guidance and much more, all enabled by our global scale.

The well-being of the animals we treat is always at the centre of everything we do. Our multiple Clinical Boards help our veterinary professionals to deliver clinical excellence, patient safety, welfare, training, purchasing and disciplinary matters.

A vital sector

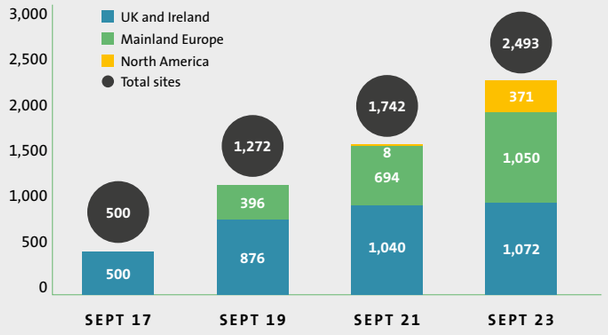
The veterinary profession is a vital sector providing essential services to consumers, farmers, food producers and governments, which help ensure both animal and human health and well-being, as well as safeguarding the food chain.

From promoting the responsible use of antibiotics and fighting against antimicrobial resistance, to raising awareness of infection prevention and championing animal welfare issues, we're proud of the work we do to support vital public health and environmental issues.

VISION
Our vision is to be the best veterinary group in the world.

COUNTRIES WE OPERATE IN

NUMBER OF SITES



PURPOSE
HEALTHY ANIMALS HAPPY OWNERS

PEOPLE PROMISE
To be a great place to work

CUSTOMER PROMISE
World-class veterinary care, delivered locally

SUSTAINABILITY PROMISE
A force for good

VALUES

We Care

We Dare

We Share

WE CARE
We care for animals and people, keep our promises and treat each other with decency and respect.

WE DARE
We dare to innovate, encourage entrepreneurial thinking and identify opportunities to succeed in a changing world.

WE SHARE
We share knowledge and best practice and make decisions based on trust, dialogue, commitment and engagement.

Positive Pawprint strategy

Russell Trenter
GROUP CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER & POSITIVE PAWPRINT EXECUTIVE SPONSOR

"Our Positive Pawprint strategy brings our sustainability promise to be a force for good to life.

As our business continues to develop and grow, it helps guide our decisions at Board and Executive Committee, through our regions and countries, to our 2,500+ locations.

The targets and commitments show we're serious about helping every one of us who works here play a part in IVC Evidensia being a sustainability leader in the veterinary sector."

Our Positive Pawprint strategy is based on three pillars, People, Planet and Patients, and supports our aim to protect the health and happiness of customers and their pets, while reducing our impacts on the environment. Our strategy is underpinned by KPIs and targets to measure our progress across these three pillars. Across almost 2,500 locations in 20 countries, tracking KPI data can be challenging, but we continue to make progress to improve the scope and quality of the data we capture to enable us to report as fully as we can on sustainability performance across the Group.

Our Positive Pawprint commitments have focused on the impacts of the largest part of our business, our small animal clinics and hospitals. However, we want to ensure that all parts of the Group are engaged on our sustainability journey and, during the year, worked with our farm and equine teams and our Pet Funeral Board to develop a set of KPIs tailored to the sustainability impacts of their operations. Progress against these will feed into Group sustainability reporting.

We have developed policies for the key aspects of our sustainability strategy. These are referenced throughout this report and are published at ivcevidensia.com.

The Group Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that our sustainability strategy is implemented, and key sustainability and climate risks are effectively managed. Non-executive director Jarl Dahlfors has responsibility for sustainability and climate issues at Group Board level, and is supported by the Chief Operating Officer to ensure initiatives are implemented at Executive Committee level and across the Group.

The Group Board and Executive Committee delegate the management of sustainability strategy to the Positive Pawprint Steering Committee. The Committee oversees the implementation of the Positive Pawprint strategy and progress including performance against specific targets, while also reviewing sustainability-related risks, developments and opportunities.

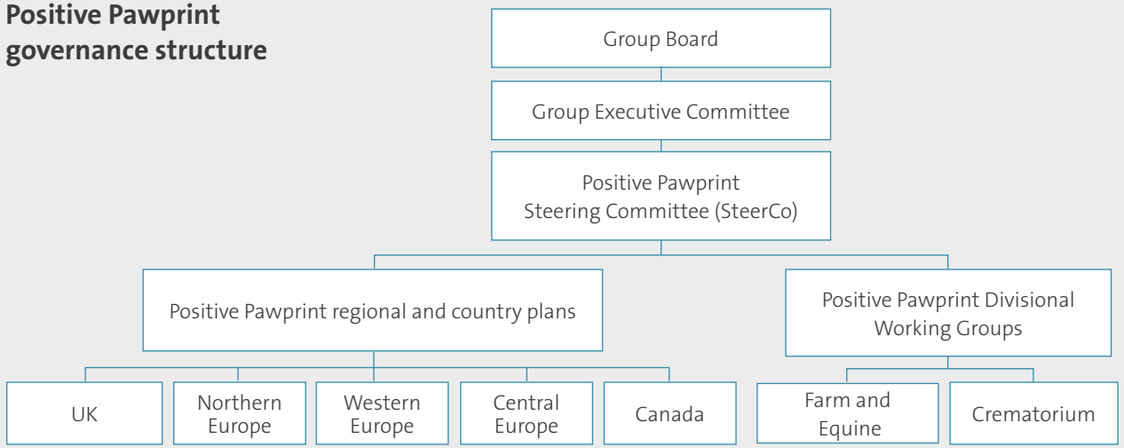
Our largest countries have designated sustainability leads to ensure that sustainability risks and opportunities are embedded into their strategies and performance is monitored. We also have functional sustainability leads and working groups for specific areas of the business, including Procurement, Crematoriums, Farm, Equine, Finance and One Health.

The Positive Pawprint Growing our company as a force for good

Caring for People	Caring for Planet	Caring for Patients
Protect and promote the health and well-being of our teams	Transition our company towards net-zero climate impact	Deliver the highest possible standards of care quality and safety
Offer the highest standards of client care and communication	Minimise our waste footprint through optimal management	Promote and innovate integrated animal health solutions
Create welcoming, diverse and inclusive workplaces	Train all clinicians on applied sustainability in veterinary care	Continually grow our clinical knowledge and skills
Empower clinics to contribute to their local communities	Evolve industry-leading sustainable procurement practices	Continually share knowledge, incidents and best practice
Ensure human rights are respected across our value chain	Practise leading standards of chemical and pharma management	Collaborate with peers to innovate best practice on antimicrobial resistance

Governance
Management, Transparency and Disclosure

Positive Pawprint governance structure

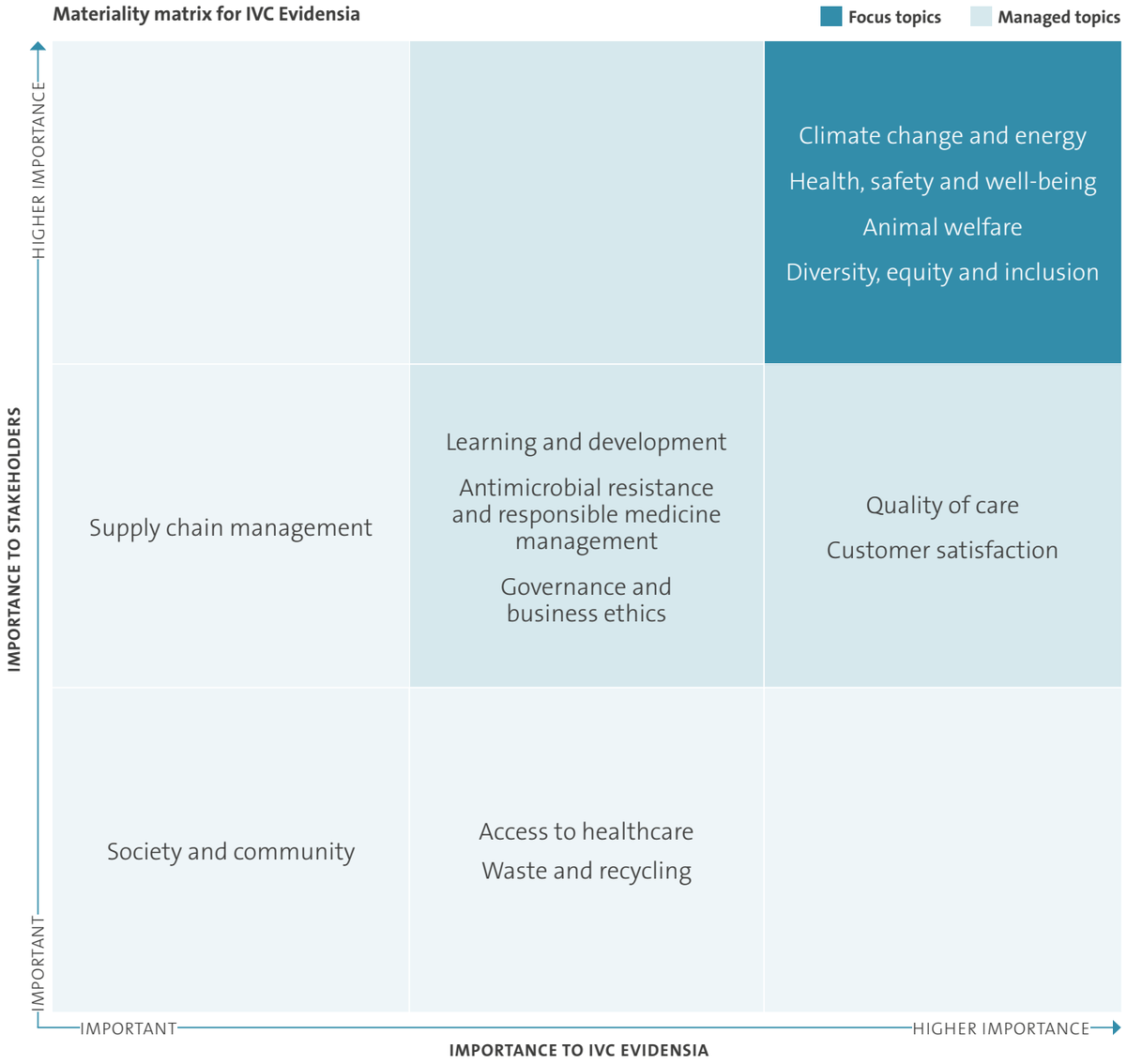


Materiality and risk

In order to ensure that our strategy continues to focus on those environmental and social issues of most importance to our stakeholders, and which represent the most important risks and opportunities for the future of IVC Evidensia, we undertake materiality assessments every two years. In addition, the Positive Pawprint SteerCo conducts annual reviews of material issues, so that any emerging risks can be captured and included within our strategic planning.

Climate change and energy; diversity, equity and inclusion; animal welfare and health; safety and well-being continue to be key priorities for our stakeholders. In the year ahead, we plan to undertake a double materiality assessment to further enhance our understanding of ESG risk and to support our preparation for the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD).

Materiality matrix for IVC Evidensia



Sustainability and Climate change is considered a Principal Risk for IVC Evidensia. ESG risks are assessed using the Group risk methodology and considered as part of our Enterprise Risk Framework, including reviews by the Executive Committee. Climate-related risks are a focus and we recognise their ability both directly and indirectly to impact IVC Evidensia.
We continue to work to adopt the Task Force for Climate-related Financial Disclosure (TCFD) framework and publish a summary of climate-related risks and opportunities, the potential impact on our business and actions we are taking to respond. This is available at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint. We will continue to develop the detail of our TCFD disclosures as we complete further analysis and strengthen our approach, including financial assessments of the scenario analysis.

The Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB) has developed a set of industry-specific sustainability standards. Our Positive Pawprint Report communicates a number of the industry-specific metrics developed by the SASB for the Health Care Distributors discipline. While this is designed for human healthcare, we feel it is the SASB discipline most closely aligned to IVC Evidensia's business operations. Our disclosure is available at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint.

Stakeholders

Views from our stakeholders are important in helping us to shape our overall approach and individual initiatives and we aim to ensure the issues, concerns and interest areas of stakeholders feed into our sustainability strategy and initiatives.

The table details our key stakeholder groups and how we engage with them on sustainability issues.

We welcome any stakeholder feedback through our inbox at positivepawprint@ivcevidensia.com. For further detail on IVC Evidensia's approach to stakeholder engagement, see IVC Acquisitions Midco Limited Annual Report and Accounts 2023.

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	KEY ESG INTERESTS	ENGAGEMENT AND OUTCOMES
Employees	• Quality of care • Animal welfare • Safety and well-being • GHG emissions • Waste and recycling	We update our employees on sustainability issues via regional summaries of our Positive Pawprint Report, which are translated into all major employee languages, and also via quarterly Positive Pawprint video newsletters. The Positive Pawprint webinar series provides access to expert speakers on a wide range of sustainability topics. During 2023, there were over 31,000 views of the webinar content by IVC Evidensia employees. We encourage feedback via email and our sustainability chat forum. Our Positive Pawprint and Positive Hoofprint Toolkits provide detailed guidance for clinic teams to help them embed sustainability in their daily operations.
Customers	• Quality of care • Accessibility and affordability of care	We continually look to improve access to care for our customers. Innovative clinical approaches such as wellness testing and use of artificial intelligence (AI) technology can improve patient care. The IVC Evidensia Care Fund provides access to life-saving care for the animals of customers who could not otherwise afford it. Our pet health plans, offered in the UK, Ireland and the Netherlands, focus on ongoing preventive maintenance of animal well-being and help customers pay for the regular care their pet needs in a more manageable, affordable way through monthly subscriptions. We continue to enhance customer experience through online appointments, a digital app and a trial of telemedicine in Sweden.
Suppliers	• Waste reduction • Antimicrobial resistance and medicines management • Climate risk and GHG emissions	We partner with our suppliers to achieve our shared sustainability goals. We work with them on human rights, for example around the launch of our Supplier Code of Conduct, and on initiatives to reduce the environmental impact of products, specifically waste and carbon footprint. A requirement for GHG reduction targets was included in contracts for key pharmaceutical suppliers this year and will be a focus for ongoing engagement. We also confirmed our Own-brand Responsible Sourcing Principles, which will be communicated to suppliers in the year ahead.
Investors	• Climate risk and GHG emissions • Quality of care • Diversity and inclusion • Health, safety and well-being • Business ethics and governance	We share periodic sustainability-related updates with analysts, investors and rating agencies, through one-to-one meetings and our sustainability reporting. We work closely with some investors on the development of our greenhouse gas targets and climate strategy.
Government and regulators	• Quality of care • Business ethics and governance	Group Veterinary Medical Board and National Clinical Boards in each market communicate with their respective regulators to ensure we continue to deliver leading standards of care and protect animal welfare, and our veterinary teams are supported in fulfilling their professional obligations.
Community	• Animal welfare • Affordability of care	Our vets play active roles in their local communities, and we support this through the IVC Evidensia Local Community Grants Fund and encourage national charity partnerships, such as the UK partnership with StreetVet. We have strategic partnerships to support national animal welfare, and initiatives such as our Non-Accidental Injury helpline are made available to the wider veterinary community.

Embedding sustainability into our culture

We have a regular programme of communications to raise awareness of sustainability. Quarterly Positive Pawprint video newsletters showcase achievements across the Group. Sustainability is also included in our core training programmes, for example as part of the international Graduate Academy and Artemis Leaders Programme, and a regular topic for our Group Leadership team meetings. In the UK, those clinic teams that are really living our Sustainability Promise are recognised as part of our annual Brilliant Awards.

During the year, we have hosted a series of 15 Positive Pawprint webinars giving our colleagues the opportunity to hear from expert speakers on topics relevant to all aspects of our sustainability strategy. Topics covered have included climate strategy and energy efficiency, responsible antimicrobial use, quality improvement strategy, chemical free cleaning, and neurodiversity. As part of our strategic partnership with VetSustain, two additional webinars, on Promoting Biodiversity Locally and Sustainable Food and Farming, were hosted via the Webinar Vet platform and made available to vets across the profession. To date, the webinar recordings have been accessed over 31,000 times by colleagues from IVC Evidensia and also the wider profession from the UK and Europe. The webinars are hosted on dedicated areas of our Learning Hub to provide a resource library for others to access.

Our Positive Pawprint webinar series has been accessed over

31,000

times by colleagues from IVC Evidensia and also the wider profession

Rowe Vets in Yate, UK, have promoted blister pack recycling as part of their sustainability initiatives.

Positive Pawprint Toolkit

In 2022, we launched our Positive Pawprint Toolkit in response to our clinics asking what they could do at a local level to support our sustainability goals. The Toolkit is based around checklists that align with our three pillars – People, Planet and Patients – with a number of performance metrics to be completed, all supported by extensive guidance resources. The aim is to make sustainability improvements feel more achievable by breaking actions down into simple steps, which even the busiest clinic team should be able to implement within their day-to-day operations. We have been delighted with the response and now have 150 clinics in the UK and Finland working on the Toolkit. The checklists have been completed by 28 clinics, 26 from the UK and two from Finland, which are now confirmed as IVC Evidensia Positive Pawprint Partners.

> **Over 150 clinics are using our Toolkits to improve sustainability at a local level."**

In September 2023, we launched the Positive Hoofprint Toolkit to ensure that our farm and equine clinics also have similar step-by-step guidance to help them achieve the same goals, while taking into account the unique ways in which they work and the communities they serve. The Toolkit is already being used by six farm and equine clinics in the UK, and we hope to have our first Positive Hoofprint Partner before very long.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the year ahead, we plan to launch both the Positive Pawprint and Hoofprint Toolkits in Ireland, France and Spain, as well as continuing to encourage further adoption in the UK and Finland. We will also continue our Positive Pawprint Webinar series to provide expert guidance for our teams on key sustainability issues.

CASE STUDY

Introducing some of our Positive Pawprint Partners

Rowe Veterinary Group, Yate

"The Positive Pawprint Toolkit provided a framework to look at sustainability across our clinic, including improving staff well-being, maintaining high clinical standards, and excellent client and patient care. At Yate, we have used it to evaluate our clinic and make sustainable changes. The checklists split the project into bite-sized parts, making it less overwhelming. Being a Positive Pawprint Partner is just the start, there's lots to work on!"

Rachel Power
VETERINARY SURGEON

What we have achieved so far

- Recycling bins in every room and reminders to turn lights off
- Team trained on low flow anaesthesia, with capnography monitoring
- Closely monitoring antibiotic use with dedicated Antibiotic Guardian
- Promoting biodiversity through insect hotels and planting pollinators
- Strong links with wildlife charities and use of Local Community Grant
- Reminders of mental health support and trained Mental Health First Aider

Omaeläinklinikka Lohja in Finland

"Sustainability has always been a priority for our clinic with many of the team already active on various initiatives. The Toolkit provided a clear structure for our work with easy-to-use checklists. We're so proud to be the first Positive Pawprint Partner in Finland."

Catrin Ilmoni
CLINIC MANAGER

What we have achieved so far

- Green Ambassador in the team who focuses on the points of our environmental action plan
- Use electronic documents to save paper
- Use ecofriendly chemicals whenever possible and try to minimise the use of toxic chemicals
- Use reusable gowns for dentistry
- Signs to remind the team to turn lights off
- All trained to work with suspected abuse of animals
- Partner with local animal rescue providing veterinary care and also donations of food and supplies
- Staff meetings to discuss cases and share learnings, and also check in on team well-being
- Species-specific waiting area for cats

Heartland Vets

"At the beginning, the checklist can look daunting, but you soon realise it is not weighty and there are a lot of ways to implement changes. Get people involved and excited: it gets really fun and rewarding! I wanted to do my bit to feel prouder of the veterinary industry, and to be able to say we are driving the change towards sustainability."

Helen Llambias-Maw
VETERINARY SURGEON

What we have achieved so far

- Weekly mobile clinic to reduce both ours and our clients' emissions
- Perform faecal egg count before worming all horses
- Training on low flow anaesthesia
- Regular placements for students and visits to the local nursery to provide education on animals
- Lunch and learns on best practice nutrition for different patients

Neighbourhood Vet, London

"When we heard about the Positive Pawprint we were very keen to get involved. Our customers see that we provide great veterinary care while being conscientious and minimising cost to the planet, and our Patient initiatives support us in improving welfare and clinical standards. IVC Evidensia is a massive company, so if we can get all clinics on board this could make a substantial contribution to continuing to reduce our carbon footprint!"

Dr Topaz Koch
MRCVS

What we have achieved so far

- Trained staff in low flow anaesthesia and adopted Sevoflurane instead of Isoflurane
- Tackling unnecessary flea treatments and recommending oral formulation
- Reduced single-use surgical items
- Reduced deliveries to twice a week
- Active QI projects, with post-op complications audit completed
- RWAF rabbit-friendly status achieved and working on silver ISFM certification
- Clearly communicated procedures on non-accidental injury
- Partnership with StreetVet animal rescue and the Wildlife Lodge

Caring for People

In this section

13 Supported, engaged teams
14 Protecting and promoting the well-being of our teams
15 Building a strong learning culture
17 A diverse and inclusive workspace
21 High standards of health and safety
21 Human rights
22 Supporting local communities

Our commitments:

- Protect and promote the health and well-being of our teams
- Continually grow our clinical knowledge and skills, and support our employees to reach their potential
- Create welcoming, diverse and inclusive workplaces
- Empower clinics to contribute to their local communities
- Ensure human rights are respected across our value chain

Our key achievements:

Supporting students from ethnic minority backgrounds to join the veterinary profession through UK scholarship schemes and Canadian bursaries.

Over 23,000 days of online and face-to-face learning delivered as part of internal learning and development (L&D) programmes (not including external CPD).

Successful launch of Flexible Working Toolkit in the UK supporting clinic teams to achieve work/life balance.

Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals

Relevant policies

- Code of Conduct
- Supplier Code of Conduct
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Group Health and Safety Policy
- Modern Slavery Policy

Our targets

By 2025, to have 50% of senior roles* filled by women

By 2025, to have funded 50 vet scholars and 15 nurse scholars from ethnically diverse backgrounds

By 2023, to have established well-being programmes in all our markets

By 2025, suppliers representing at least 95% of centrally contracted spend to have signed the IVC Evidensia Supplier Code of Conduct or provided their own

Our commitment to Healthy Animals, Happy Owners is intrinsically linked to the skills, knowledge and well-being of our more than 41,000 colleagues.

Our People strategy is focused on making IVC Evidensia a great place to work, where colleagues have the support to deliver outstanding care to animals and their owners, to be themselves and to flourish as individuals, at the same time benefitting from the opportunities that come from being part of IVC Evidensia's larger network.

Our KPIs

KPI	Metric	Scope of data	Our performance 2023	2022
Gender diversity	Percentage of women in senior roles*	Group	50%	45%
Ethnic diversity	Number of vet and nurse scholarships funded by students from ethnically diverse backgrounds	UK	47 (37 vet and 10 nurse)	32 (25 vet and 7 nurse)
Well-being	Number of countries with well-being programmes in place	Group	20 markets	10 markets
Clinical and professional development	Number of days of online and face-to-face learning as part of internal L&D programmes (does not include external clinical and professional development)	Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, France, UK, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Canada	23,813	9,168
Employee engagement	Percentage of employees taking part in annual Global Employee Survey	Group	75%	55%
Safety	Accident incidence rate per 1,000 employees	Group	122	85
Supply chain standards	Percentage of Group suppliers (by spend) signed up to IVC Evidensia Supplier Code of Conduct (or provided their own equivalent)	Group	89%	80%
Community investment	Number of IVC Evidensia Local Community grants awarded	Group	219	107

* Senior roles defined as Board, Executive Committee and direct reports, Group Veterinary Medical Board (GVMB), Country Managers and direct reports, and Clinical Directors.

Supported, engaged teams

As we work towards making IVC Evidensia a great place to work, we want to hear from our employees about what they think works well and where we can improve. Our second IVC Evidensia Global Employee Survey was launched in February 2023, with all employees across the Group encouraged to participate, including all clinic and support staff. Over 75% of employees (around 28,000 people) took part across 18 countries, up from 55% in 2022. We are pleased that we have improved our scores in many areas, including key areas of Engagement and Leadership.

IVC Evidensia Global Employee Survey 2023 (scores out of 100)

	2023	2022
Engagement Index	79	78
Leadership	74	71
Social and organisational work environment	71	69
Well-being	73	73
Diversity and inclusion	83	83

Following the publication of the survey results, country managers developed action plans to build on the strengths identified while also focusing on areas of improvement, with progress tracked by the Group Executive Committee.

Celebrating our amazing team members at the IVC Evidensia Brilliant Awards in Ireland.

Protecting and promoting the well-being of our teams

Protecting and promoting the well-being of our colleagues is a key priority for us and we now support well-being and mental health programmes across all of our 20 markets. The approach varies country by country, with programmes carefully tailored to local needs and culture. Our well-being strategy has three focus areas:

Well-being and mental health resources

Employees in all markets are provided with access to professional support services. This year, in Spain, we launched our psychological support service and have been able to provide support to more than 50 colleagues. Spanish colleagues also have access to *Somos IVCE*, our corporate wellness site with healthy events and webinars, challenges, nutrition experts and our own financial health section.

Training – to help embed well-being

We continue to train team members to equip them with the specific skills needed to promote a culture of good mental well-being. This year, in Canada, training in Mental Health First Aid was provided to more than 25 clinic team members, and, in the UK, we've been working with MHFA England, with over 500 colleagues now fully trained Mental Health First Aiders, and also provided dedicated mental health and well-being training for 139 of our senior leaders by mental health expert Dr Rosie McAllister. We partnered with the DPJ Foundation to train our farm teams on mental health support strategies (see case study). In Portugal, we sponsored all our clinic management and Well-Being Champions to attend the first Vet Mental Health Summit.

Community and culture

At Group level we aim to create initiatives that will make a positive contribution to the well-being of our teams.

Our flexible working programme (launched in the UK this year) recognises the importance of supporting our colleagues as individuals and helping them to balance work and home. Our Care Fund is highly valued by our clinical teams, as well as our customers, across the Group. Similarly, colleagues involved in national or local charitable support tell us how valuable it is for them to be supported in these efforts. VetStrategy's annual Aleks' Promise campaign seeks to promote better mental health, and this year focused on the benefits of exposure to nature to lower stress and increase empathy and cooperation.

Beyond our commitment as a group, we also encourage our clinic and hospital teams to embed well-being as part of everyday culture, empowering clinics to develop their own local programmes to best suit the individual well-being needs of their team.

Well-being initiatives vary from clinic to clinic. Ardene House clinic in Scotland organised a surprise colleague Appreciation Day with the objective of bringing busy teams together, giving them some time to connect and bond, and saying thank you for the amazing work they do every day. The Molinel clinic in France provides employees with access to a clinical psychologist and advice from a nutrition expert, and encourages physical well-being through yoga sessions and sports coaching. Nacka clinic in Sweden encourages the team to come together weekly for a team breakfast and to take part in park socials to let off steam after work, and offers regular visits from a massage therapist. Building a strong team culture where well-being is a priority has helped the clinic see lower stress levels, happier colleagues, less absence and better staff retention.

In the year ahead, we will continue to celebrate leading practice to help our teams learn from each other as we continue to improve the support we provide to our colleagues.

Roisin Fitzsimons, Area Director, receives an award from mental health charity AWARE in recognition of IVC Evidensia's support for mental health awareness in veterinary clinics across Northern Ireland, along with the reinforcement of a positive work culture.

Promoting employee well-being by ensuring that employees' dogs are safe and well while they are at work – Stromsholm Hospital in Stockholm opened purpose-built accommodation for staff pets during 2023.

CASE STUDY

Supporting mental health awareness in the farming community

Our farm vets now have access to Mental Health Awareness in Agriculture training through our partnership with the DPJ Foundation.

Kay Helyar, Training Manager for the DPJ Foundation, explained: "Farming can be an isolated occupation and many farmers sadly see poor mental health as a sign of weakness. Typically, a farmer will see their vet far more frequently than their doctor and it is often a trusted relationship. If vets can learn to spot the signs that someone is struggling, how to talk to them about it, and where they can signpost to support, that small intervention could make a huge difference."

Jim Hopkins, Clinical Director at Steffan Vets and Vice Chair of the Farm Animal Clinical Board, said: "The training provided a great overview of the signs we can look out for in our clients as well as how we can protect our own mental health when dealing with the difficult decisions and tough situations that come with providing veterinary care to herds of animals. My team is now well placed to offer reassurance and signpost specific help and support."

Building a strong learning culture

Our teams are committed to continuous learning, fostering professional growth and helping enhance patient care.

With a significant investment of approximately £20 million in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) across the Group in 2023 alone, we prioritise providing access to diverse educational opportunities. Our tailored learning portfolio, focusing on workplace and peer-to-peer learning, is strategically designed with clear objectives to help improve our care.

Approximately

£20 million

invested in Continuous Professional Development across the Group

Central to our educational efforts is the Learning Hub digital platform, accessible to over 95% of our more than 41,000 employees globally. Available in multiple languages, the Hub covers clinical topics, client communication and well-being support. Our digital support extends to facilitating peer-to-peer and workplace learning, exemplified in Sweden's weekly rounds, where specialists from larger animal hospitals conduct live seminars for smaller clinic staff, promoting continuous learning and collaboration.

This year, we welcomed over

400

graduates from across eight countries to our Graduate Academy Congress

Engaging the vets of the future

With the ongoing challenge with availability of qualified vets across the whole sector, we are highly committed to helping young vets have a positive and inspiring start to their careers.

In 2023, our dedication to nurturing the next generation of UK veterinarians was evident through immersive week-long boot camps in equine and farm clinics, focusing on hands-on learning experiences. In such a supportive environment, these collaborative sessions, covering skills from blood sampling to basic surgery, had a positive impact on the students present, who valued the invaluable experience they gained.

"The week exceeded all my expectations and has been unforgettable. I got invaluable, hands-on experience in a supportive and non-judgemental environment. I have learnt so much AND got to know some incredible peers!"

BOOT CAMP PARTICIPANT

Our ongoing support for young veterinarians extended through our International Graduate Academy, offering a comprehensive CPD programme blending traditional and online learning with coaching support. Since its 2014 inception, over 1,600 graduates from 10 countries have enrolled, reinforcing the important role it plays in our educational efforts. This year's annual IVC Evidensia Graduate Academy Congress welcomed over 450 graduates from across eight countries. With a mix of panel discussions, workshops and breakout sessions, the event provides an opportunity for our graduates to learn from senior vets, engage with industry partners and build their peer network, and delivered over 60 hours of CPD. Looking ahead, a 2024 review will help us ensure the graduate Academy continues to have a positive impact.

Additionally, our dedication to innovation is evident in the Progression programme, empowering young veterinarians to confidently perform diverse procedures. Tailored for large animal teams, this initiative, trialled successfully with equine vets, anticipates a 2023 launch for Farm and Small Animal practitioners, emphasising our commitment to shaping skilled and confident veterinarians.

New graduates come together in Stockholm, and take part in CPD at our Graduate Academy Congress.

CASE STUDY

GP VET FUTURES

Career progression programmes to develop skills unique to the general practitioner (GP) have been underserved in the sector and this gap has been identified by external bodies as crucial to retention in the profession.

We are particularly proud to be leading the way with our innovative GP Vet Futures programme, made up of monthly online sessions with a variety of external keynote speakers, a peer-to-peer social media space and two-day in-person event. This event included sessions from subject matter experts from across our Group in preventive healthcare, quality improvement, welfare and analgesia, as well as experienced GPs facilitating discussion on clinical controversies.

"The GP Vet programme course is enhancing my love of the GP vet world and makes me proud to be a GP vet. I can review and reflect upon my skills that I use each day and every day. It also enables me to put forward new ideas and further developments at my own clinic."

GP VET FUTURES PARTICIPANT

LOOKING FORWARD

After our successful UK pilot in 2023, we will scale the programme and extend it to at least one other market in 2024.

"The need to support GP vets is understood now more than ever before within the profession, and IVC Evidensia is very much at the forefront with the dedicated resources we have allocated to this."

EDWARD DAVIES, 2023 GP VET LEAD

Our referral support

Our small animal and equine specialists and referral clinicians see some of the most challenging cases.

Over the past year, the specialist community has grown significantly to include 290 specialists, 55 residency graduates awaiting board exams, 106 residents and 120 interns across 18 specialities worldwide.

To support this diverse network, we provide targeted training through online journal clubs, resident-specific training rounds, and bi-annual summits. The IVC Evidensia e-library is available in many markets for the latest research and there are monthly specialist/resident rounds in 11 disciplines to promote continuous learning, while in the UK we have a modular programme to help improve the skills of referral nurses.

LOOKING FORWARD

During 2024, we will focus on developing our internship structure and providing enhanced support for research training across the Group.

50

future leaders from 10 countries took part in our International Artemis Leaders Programme

Leadership development

Our International Artemis Leaders Programme is in its second year, training 50 future leaders from 10 countries, now including Canada. We also partnered with external organisations for the Dare to Lead and Dare to Develop initiatives, supporting the newly created Area Director and Area Support Manager roles in the UK. A pilot group of 50 is also pursuing the CMI Level 5 Certificate. In 2023, we introduced our new Leadership Behaviours, fully aligned with our values, which will also shape our future leadership programmes.

LOOKING FORWARD

A new programme for our Clinic Leaders is in development, together with a series of skills webinars and coaching of difficult conversations and managing conflict.

Artemis class of 2023.

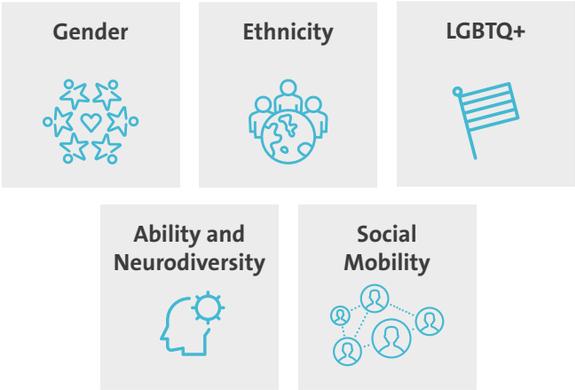
A diverse and inclusive workspace

We believe in a level playing field for all in the veterinary industry. We aim to create welcoming and inclusive workplaces where our employees feel valued and can be themselves. We want to ensure that veterinary careers feel accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, and to create veterinary clinics that are inclusive for all customers.

We established a Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Working Group with representatives from across our international business, which reviewed our current D&I initiatives before developing a renewed strategy, agreed by our Group Executive Committee in September. Specific populations were identified as the focus for our D&I workstreams: Gender, Ethnicity, LGBTQ+, Ability and Neurodiversity, and Social Mobility.

Collecting data on the diversity profile across our international Group is challenging in many of our markets. In the absence of data, we can use the D&I Index within the Global Employee Engagement Survey to track employee opinions on how we are performing. This year, we saw a score of 73 (out of 100).

Diversity and Inclusion Focus Groups



Gender diversity

Eighty-seven percent of our colleagues are women, and we want to ensure that our women employees feel supported at all stages in their career with IVC Evidensia.

We set a goal to have women in half of all senior roles* by 2025 and are pleased to have achieved this during 2023. Our focus now is on further work to ensure our culture supports our women employees at all levels of the business, and to create a pipeline of women talent for senior roles.

Our Artemis International Leaders Programme is core to our aim to support the development of more women leaders. While we welcome both men and women to the programme, nominations should reflect the demographics of our company; therefore the majority of participants are women. More than 20% of participants from 2022 have moved to a new leadership role within IVC Evidensia.

We know that flexible working can be extremely important for colleagues, and are keen that our women colleagues are supported when they're balancing career and family life, and particularly when making life decisions. The launch of our UK Flexible Working Toolkit and Farm 24 initiative (see case studies on page 19) have been well received and we hope to extend them to other markets.

We are committed to ensuring all employees are fairly rewarded for their work and have equal access to all opportunities. We continue to evolve our pay and reward, further reinforcing parity, and publish a Gender Pay report on our website.

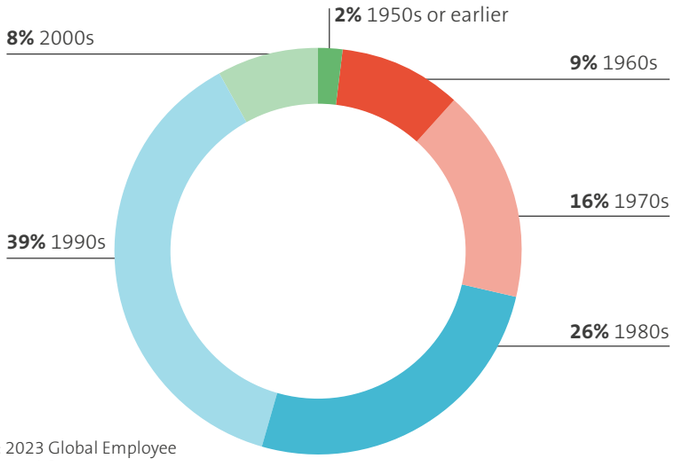
In recognition of International Women's Day on 8 March 2023, we asked our colleagues to nominate a woman they work with who, through their actions and leadership, is making a positive impact on their colleagues, animal patients and clients every day. We received hundreds of nominations, full of inspiring stories from across IVC Evidensia.

* Senior roles defined as Board, Executive Committee and direct reports, Group Veterinary Medical Board (GVMB), Country Managers and direct reports, and Clinical Directors.

Gender diversity

* Senior roles defined as Board, Executive Committee and direct reports, Group Veterinary Medical Board (GVMB), Country Managers and direct reports, and Clinical Directors.

Age of employees (by decade of birth)



Source: 2023 Global Employee Engagement Survey.

Pride Month was celebrated across IVC Evidensia this year. VetStrategy took the opportunity to launch an LGBTQ2S+ Employee Resource Group and more than 30 clinic team members received a certificate from Pride at Work following completion of a course focused on setting the foundation to create an inclusive culture.

Estimates indicate that over 20% of the general population are neurodiverse, often higher in science-based professions such as ours. We are committed to support our neurodivergent colleagues and have provided training on what neurodiversity means and some of the simple things that our locations can do to offer a neuro-inclusive culture and environment. During the year, Oaks Vets in Scotland has been trialling the National Autistic Society Autism Friendly Award and we will use the learnings from this to support ongoing work and improve the guidance and training we give to our teams.

Socio-economic factors can have an influence on our business and profession's diversity, and we're dedicated to finding ways to assist veterinary students, regardless of their background. This year, we pledged £250,000 for IVC Evidensia's UK EMS Bursary Programme, aiding students in clinical placements by alleviating financial obstacles like travel and accommodation costs, crucial especially amid the current cost-of-living crisis.

VetStrategy clinic teams joined in Pride activities in their communities.

CASE STUDY

Promoting flexible working

Surveys continue to tell us that vets value flexibility and the ability to adjust their work life to ensure they have a meaningful life outside of work. Flexible working is for everyone, not just for a particular gender, for parents, or those with caring responsibilities – it's about employees across the generations being able to balance personal and work life successfully. It improves the physical and mental health of team members, boosting morale and leading to less time off due to sickness, and increased productivity.

Since launching the Flexible Working Toolkit in the UK, we have seen 85% of flexible working requests approved, and fewer vets leaving citing work/life balance as the reason. 91% of roles are now advertised as exclusively or optionally part time.

"It's really important to me that I can work flexibly and in a non-traditional manner. It means I can give my all when I'm at work and still have plenty of time to give my all at home as well."

Kay Abbott Clinical Director
BLUE HOUSE VETS

"We have vets that come in purely for school hours, and these are really popular consulting spots! And it's taken the pressure off the rest of the veterinary team."

Steve Leonard Clinical Director
LEONARD BROTHERS VETS

CASE STUDY

Farm24

For farm vets, out of hours (OOH) work is often cited as impacting on their ability to have an enjoyable family life outside of work and can drive experienced clinicians out of the profession.

In May, we set up the first OOH farm service, Farm24, which provides OOH cover to three IVC clinics in Shropshire, enabling these three clinics to decouple their day rota from their night rota. This gives flexibility in staffing, healthier rota patterns, and innovative part-time solutions to staffing and workload. The feedback from the vets and the clients has been excellent, and is something we will look to expand in the year ahead.

"Flexible working is about employees across the generations being able to balance personal and work life successfully, improving their physical and mental health and boosting morale."

Committed to supporting people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds

We are focused on investing in supporting people from minority ethnic backgrounds to have a career as a veterinary professional. As part of our UK Ethnic Diversity Scholarship programme, candidates receive an annual grant for each year of their studies, mentoring from our ethnic diversity scholarship board members, and a support network to help them through their studies and as they embark on their veterinary careers.

47

students are now being supported through the IVC Evidensia and VetsNow veterinary nurse diversity scholarships

During the year, VetStrategy launched a new Diversity Bursary initiative in Canada, supporting 10 veterinary students from BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) communities with a $5,000 bursary for the 2023/24 school year.

LOOKING FORWARD

We will build on the initiatives already in place to promote diversity and inclusion within our business, sharing successes and learnings across our international business. In addition, we will focus on building awareness and understanding, through D&I training and improved communication, and the development of employee networks and an international mentoring scheme.

In July, Navaratnam Partheeban joined as Regional Head of Farm in the South of England. This followed his mention in the 2023 King's Birthday Honours and subsequent OBE for services to inclusion, awarded in part for his founding of the British Veterinary Ethnicity and Diversity Society. On joining IVC Evidensia, he commented, "Initiatives such as the Positive Pawprint (and Hoofprint), the new flexible working policy, Farm24, and the Group's strong stance on diversity and inclusion are what drew me to the role in the first place and I hope I can drive these further and encourage best practice where possible."

CASE STUDY

IVC Evidensia's ethnic diversity scholars meet in person for the first time

In September, we welcomed our ethnic diversity scholars to an event at the Birmingham Science Museum, giving our students from varying cultural backgrounds an opportunity to meet each other, and several members of the senior IVC Evidensia leadership team, members of our Ethnic Diversity Scholarship Board, and vet nursing scholars from the Vets Now programme. Several inspirational veterinary leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds and from across the sector joined the day to give the students the support and space to share stories of their journey into the professions.

Attending scholars commented on the strength of the community that was being built and how enriching it had been to meet their peers in a networking capacity.

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for putting together such a wonderful event for us. I felt a connection with everyone there. Well done for creating such an amazing network and community for us all and a safe space for us to feel comfortable in."

Saira
SECOND-YEAR VETERINARY STUDENT

"The networking event was extremely useful and I feel very privileged to have been a part of it. It was great to speak to vets and vet students and share the similar challenges we're facing. Having the opportunity to speak to BAME vets individually about their experiences, and how they have and continue to overcome them, was invaluable to me and others."

Inayah
SECOND-YEAR VETERINARY STUDENT

Ethnic diversity scholars together in Birmingham in September.

High standards of health and safety

We're dedicated to maintaining a consistent health and safety standard across our Group so that everyone working in or visiting one of our locations leaves safe and healthy.

Our Group Health and Safety Manager collaborates with representatives from each country to ensure uniform standards. In January, we introduced a comprehensive health and safety training module, completed by 26,000 colleagues across 17 markets, expanding to Sweden, Denmark and Canada in 2024. Our risk management platform, launched in May in the UK and Ireland, covers incident reporting, compliance, auditing and risk assessment. All countries will be operational across all modules by March 2024.

As we have improved our safety management and reporting systems, we have seen an increase in the number of accidents reported, with the increase driven by improved awareness, better reporting compliance and data accuracy. For 2023, reported accidents across the Group were 4,400, up from 2,648 last year. We use this data to calculate an incidence rate based on the number of accidents per 1,000 employees to allow a direct comparison of the accidents within each country regardless of head count. Across the Group, the accident incident rate per 1,000 employees for this period was 122 (up from 85 last year).

Recognising the increased risks associated with large animals, we introduced specialised First Aider at Work training. Covering hazards farm and equine vets might encounter on farms, stables or when supporting the emergency services at road accidents, this course has received positive feedback from the 80 farm and equine vets who have completed the course, with three more sessions planned.

"Recognising the increased risks associated with large animals, we introduced specialised First Aider at Work training, with positive feedback from farm and equine vets."

Additionally, a Group Equine Health and Safety Policy, ensuring standardised safety measures, will launch in December 2023. We conducted two pilots for equine vets, focusing on solo work safety and advanced driver training for rural conditions. Both initiatives aim for wider implementation among all ambulatory vets in the upcoming year.

Human rights

We recognise our responsibility to ensure that the human rights and dignity of all who work in our business and supply chain are properly respected.

With a large global supply chain, we forge strong partnerships, assessing human rights risks nd taking necessary actions. Our policies, including the Human Rights Policy and Global Code of Ethics, are shared with employees and suppliers. Our Global Whistleblowing Policy offers a confidential channel for employees in our supply chain to report concerns.

We engage with suppliers to ensure adherence to our Supplier Code of Conduct, with 89% of centrally contracted spend now covered. By 2025, our goal is for over 95% of total Group spend to align with our Code. To support our work in this area, we've introduced a new due diligence process, enhancing our understanding of suppliers' actions and aiding our decisions in selecting preferred suppliers and ongoing engagement.

More information on our progress and activity in this area can be found in our Modern Slavery Statement, available at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint.

Supporting local communities

Our veterinary clinics are at the heart of thousands of communities around the world, caring for the companion and farm animals owned in the community, and often partnering with animal charities to care for animals in need.

These strong community ties means that our teams want to support their local communities in other ways as well, and we are keen that IVC Evidensia should support them in these efforts, where appropriate, bringing our teams together to have a greater collective impact.

"Perhaps the most valuable contribution we can make is through in-kind donations of skilled veterinary advice and care to animal charities."

We have long-standing strategic partnerships with animal charities in most of our markets. We continue to work to measure the overall value of these activities in financial terms. The sheer numbers of charities we work with is making this a complex process, but we hope to be able to report data next year. For pet owners in need, the IVC Evidensia Care Fund provides emergency funding for life-saving treatment.

We are incredibly proud of our many teams across the Group who come together to support charities, either donating their time and their skills or taking on fundraising. Just a few examples are set out on this page.

Treating abandoned animals in Ukraine

A team of IVC Evidensia veterinarians, from our Södra Djursjukhuset clinic in Sweden, travelled to Brody in Ukraine to provide much-needed veterinary care and support to a local animal shelter struggling to cope with the many homeless and abandoned animals.

Colleagues from clinics across Sweden donated food and medicine, which was sent to veterinarians working across Ukraine, and IVC Evidensia Sweden provided funds for a temporary clinic alongside the shelter, where the local animals were treated.

Veterinarian Lina Gustafsson explained, "Every day there were new animals arriving. We worked around the clock to help sterilise more than 250 dogs and cats and treated animals who were suffering with issues such as bite wounds and gastroenteritis. Despite the insurmountable challenges that the shelter is facing, they are doing what they can to help the animals. We are glad that we could provide some support."

VetStrategy provides animal care for those in need

Community giving is a core part of the culture in our Canadian VetStrategy business, often through donations of veterinary time and skills to support better animal welfare.

To highlight just a few examples, Animal Medical Centre North in Grand Prairie, Alberta hosted a blood donation drive in partnership with the Canadian Animal Blood Bank where a dozen pets (along with their loving owners) donated with smiles and tail wags all around! In partnership with Brampton Animal Services, North Town Veterinary Hospital in Brampton, Ontario held a rabies and microchipping clinic, free to the local community, which saw over 60 dogs and cats vaccinated and microchipped. In February, the team at Hôpital vétérinaire Évolution Énergie in Shawinigan Québec participated in la Journée nationale de la stérilisation animale in Québec, spaying and neutering 40 cats in their community free of charge.

Team members from Dundas West Animal Hospital, Toronto, travelled to Montanita, Ecuador for the fifth year running (photo above). This year, they spayed/neutered 117 dogs and 86 cats.

UK national partnership with StreetVet

In March, we invited colleagues across the UK to vote for our first official national charity partner and the overwhelming winner was StreetVet. StretVet provides essential veterinary care to the pets of people experiencing homelessness. During the year, clinics across the UK have come together to take part in a calendar of charity fundraising events, hoping to raise £100,000 for StreetVet.

The first national fundraiser was Million Minutes, where teams challenged themselves to get active for StreetVet and collectively clock up a million minutes of exercise. The team from Links Vet Group in Edinburgh aimed for 10,000 minutes of activity through walking, cycling, running, horse riding, dancing and exercise classes. They more than tripled their goal, completing over 31,000 minutes and raising £540. At Dave Cumber Vets in Dorset, the team had an exercise bike in practice with the aim of cycling 100 miles, sponsored by clients and colleagues. In November 2023, members of our Executive Committee climbed the roof of the O2 arena in support of StreetVet, with many other activities planned to meet our fundraising target.

IVC Evidensia Local Community Grants

The IVC Evidensia Local Community Grants Fund empowers our teams to apply for grants supporting local causes, especially vital during the cost-of-living crisis. This year, 219 teams in nine countries received grants, totalling £230,000. These funds aided 290 colleague-nominated charities, enhancing well-being within our communities.

Grants totalling

£230,000

supported 290 colleague-nominated charities across nine countries

In Ireland, Anicare clinic nominated CLG Na Fianna, a local GAA club that has a team for children with disabilities, with one-on-one mentoring, so they can be part of the club just like their siblings.

The team from Valley Veterinary Services in Chilliwack, Canada, present their Community Grant to 'Bowls of Hope' - a non-profit society that supplies meals to children in local schools who may not have access to food at home.

In France, our Saint Augustin clinic in Chamonix supported 'L'Association A Chacun son Everest' – an association which supports children with cancer or leukaemia, and women in remission from breast cancer, to help them regain their confidence and give them a new lease of life.

LOOKING FORWARD

In the year ahead, we will continue to support our teams with their important community partnerships via our Local Community Grants to enable our teams to play an active role supporting good causes.

In Germany, our Tierklinic Kalbach clinic supported Babenhausen Animal Shelter, having worked with the animal shelter on several occasions, especially with demanding operations for our four-legged friends. The donation will provide much-needed support to animals needing urgent medical care and attention.

In the Netherlands, Caressa Animal Hospitals Rotterdam nominated Rijnmond Stray Cat Foundation. The team commented, "Every year, many placed cats come to us for their sterilisation or castration through the collaboration with St Zwerfkat. We hope that many cats can be helped with this amount!"

Caring for the Planet

In this section

27 Managing our climate impacts
30 Responsible procurement
31 Resource efficiency
32 Promoting biodiversity

Our commitments:

- Transition our company towards net-zero climate impact
- Evolve industry-leading sustainability practices
- Minimise our waste footprint through optimal management
- Practise leading standards of chemical and pharma management
- Train all clinicians on applied veterinary sustainability care

Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals

Relevant policies

- Environmental Policy

Our key achievements:

85% of Group electricity from renewable sources – including 25 Netherlands clinics with solar panels, and similar installs now planned in Spain and Portugal.

Engagement underway with key suppliers to work together towards climate goals.

Own-brand responsible sourcing principles agreed outlining the sustainability standards we expect suppliers to meet, covering raw materials and production processes.

Our targets

By 2030, reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50%, and Scope 3 emissions by 30%

By 2050, reduce Group emissions to net zero

By December 2023, at least 85% of electricity purchased to be from renewable sources

By 2025, in the UK, achieve zero waste to landfill and increase our recycling rate for non-hazardous waste by 50%

By 2023, complete waste reviews in all core markets as the basis for Group waste targets

Note: Scope 1 and 2 targets are aligned with a 1.5°C science-based rate of decarbonisation and have been validated by the SBTi.

Our Caring for Planet strategy addresses key global environmental threats: climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion. We're working to embed responsible environmental management into our business strategy, aiming for reduce the environmental impact of our own operations and influence change within our supply chain and profession.

Improving the scope and quality of environmental KPI data continues to be a focus, improving the way we measure and communicate performance against our Planet KPIs. As we improve our data, we will extend the scope of our environmental KPI reporting and targets, with the ultimate objective to report our impacts across the full IVC Evidensia Group.

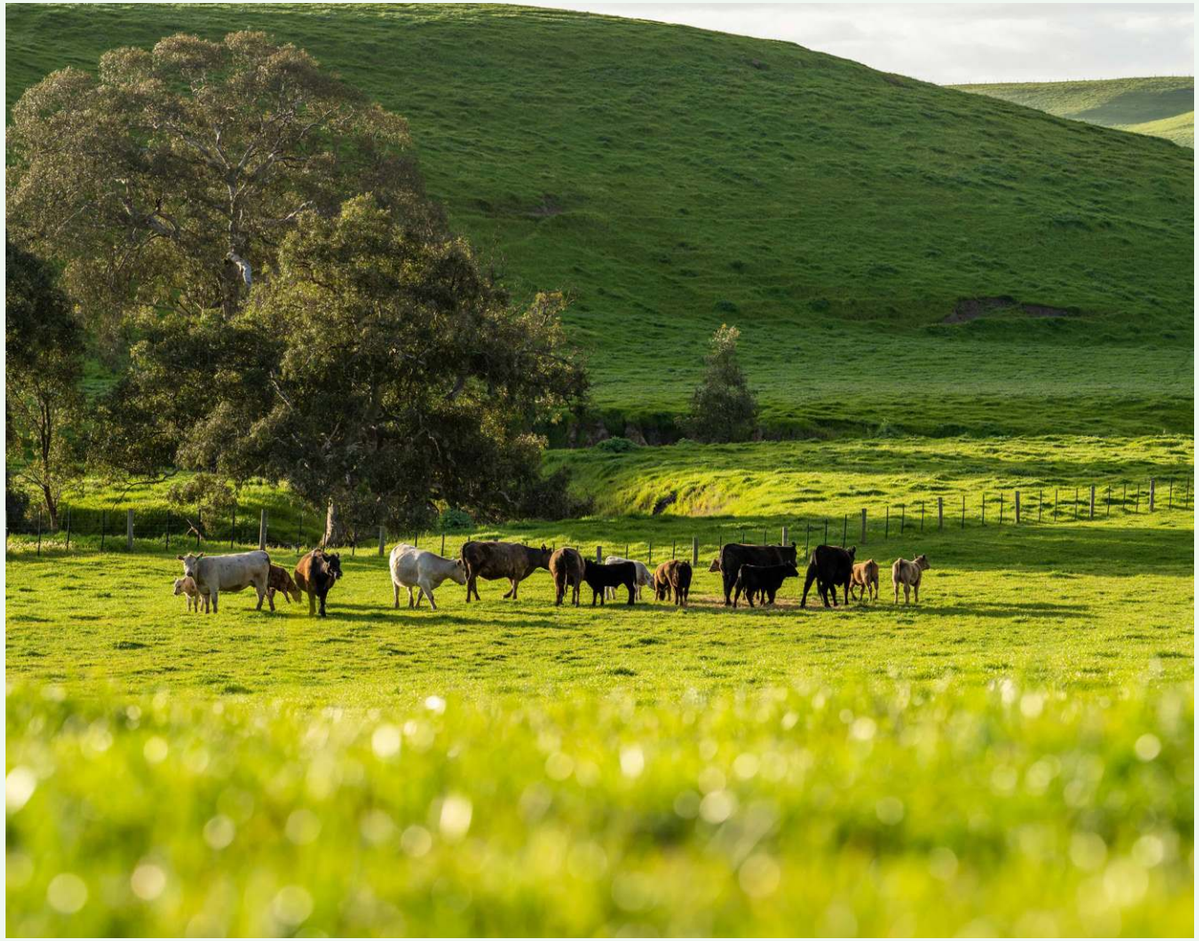
Our Sustainability team oversees vital projects like decarbonisation, collaborating internationally. Nationally, Planet leads in major markets like the UK, Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, France, and Canada focus on tailored local environmental initiatives. We've expanded this approach to Spain, Portugal, and Ireland.

Our clinics can utilise our Positive Pawprint and Positive Hoofprint Toolkits, offering guidance on impact reduction, from energy saving to biodiversity promotion. We're also developing a Planet Impact Calculator to provide a tool for our clinics to manage their environmental impacts, aiming for a trial early in 2024.

Our KPIs

KPI	Metric	Scope of data	Our performance 2023	2022*
GHG emissions	Group Scope 1 carbon emissions	Group	43,942 tonnes CO_2e	41,267 tonnes CO_2e
	Group Scope 2 carbon emissions		6,819 tonnes CO_2e	11,323 tonnes CO_2e
	Group Scope 3 carbon emissions		392,922 tonnes CO_2e	334,171 tonnes CO_2e
	Percentage of renewable electricity purchased	Group	85%	65%
Waste	Percentage of waste diverted from landfill**	UK	100%	99%
	Percentage of non-hazardous waste recycled**	UK	34%	33%

* 2022 GHG emissions data re-stated to reflect improved accuracy of data and change in Scope 3 calculation method.
** Veterinary sites and offices where waste is managed directly by IVC Evidensia.



Managing our climate impacts

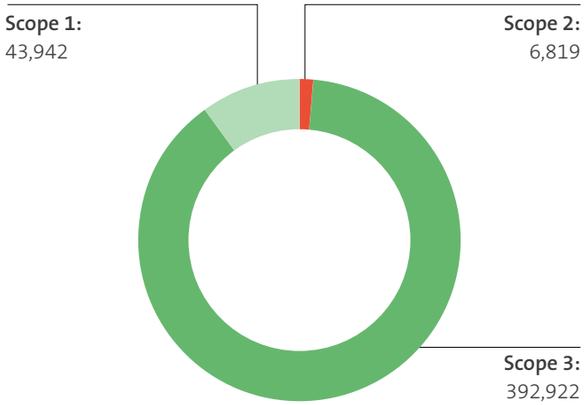
We recognise that climate change is already having a profound impact on global ecosystems, economies and populations, and so is an extremely important issue for IVC Evidensia, with the potential to impact animal health, our business and supply chain in the short, medium and long term.

During the year, we have undertaken scenario-based analysis to deepen our understanding of this area, looking at the impact of different levels of global temperature change over the short, medium and long-term. More detail on our view of the risks and opportunities, and our planned mitigations, is included in our reporting under the recommendations of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD) regulations, published at www.ivcevidensia.com/positivepawprint.

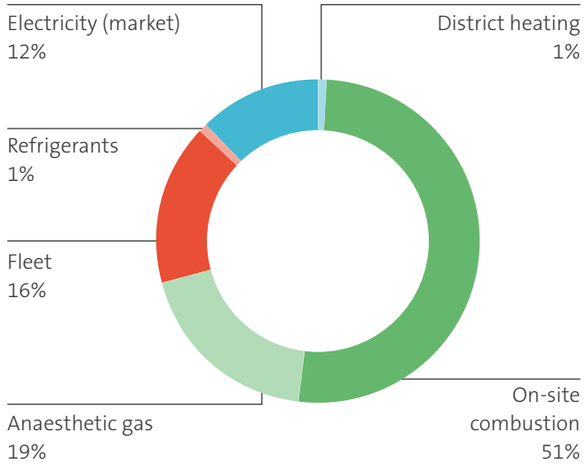
Last year, we published our science-based target to reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50% and Scope 3 emissions by 30% by 2030 (from a 2022 base year). In June 2023, this target was validated by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). In the coming year, we will develop net-zero targets and submit these to the SBTi for validation. We are targeting to be net zero by 2050.

As we continue to improve the quality and scope of our GHG emissions data, and take into account increased procurement spend across our growing Group, we know that we will see some short-term increases in the GHG emissions we report. This year, we have seen a 15% increase in the Group's total GHG footprint, predominately driven by increased spend in the supply chain and a change in the Scope 3 reporting methodology. Operational emissions (Scope 1 and 2) decreased by 3% as we extend renewable energy and energy-efficiency programmes.

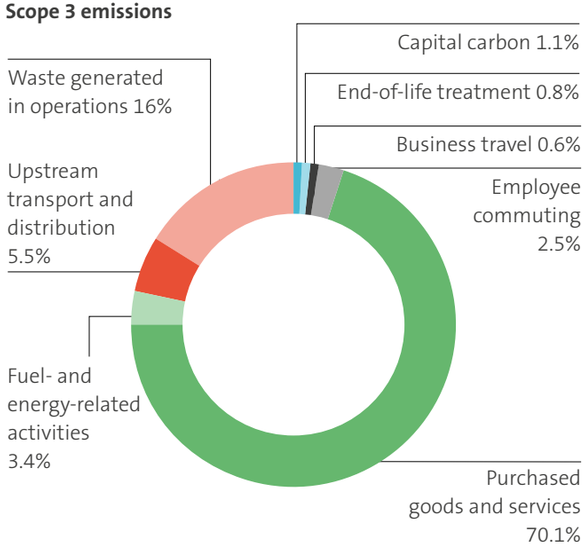
Total Group GHG emissions 2023 (tonnes CO_2e)



Combined Scope 1 and 2 emissions



Scope 3 emissions



Work to decarbonise our business requires engagement from teams across our international business as we research lower carbon solutions, build business cases and plan trials. During the year, the Group Board approved investment in country-level decarbonisation strategies, focused on delivering progress against our near-term reductions of our Scope 1 and 2 targets. The Group Investment Committee will evaluate and approve investment proposals associated with the Group's decarbonisation strategy.

2030 target

Cut absolute Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50% and Scope 3 emissions by 30%

2050 target

Net zero

Methodology

IVC Evidensia has calculated our GHG emissions in line with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) Greenhouse Gas Protocol Corporate Standard. We report emissions in carbon dioxide equivalent (CO_2e) where IVC Evidensia has operational control. In addition, we utilise supporting standards including:

GHG Protocol Scope 2 Guidance, 2015

GHG Protocol Corporate Value Chain (Scope 3) Standard, 2011

Scope 1 includes direct emissions from sources owned or controlled by IVC Evidensia. It includes emissions associated with our managed locations including resources used for heating/crematorium process such as natural gas, liquefied petroleum gas and burning oil. In addition, it includes fuel utilised by our vehicle fleet, anaesthetic gas and refrigerants. Data is collected from invoices, fuel cards and other documentation. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting 2023 were used to convert to CO_2e.

Scope 2 includes indirect emissions associated with the consumption of purchased electricity and district heating. Data is collected from invoices and other documentation. Where data is not directly available, extrapolations are made based upon the average electricity consumption per full-time employee (FTE) and allocated (at a regional level based on the most representative country).

Scope 3 includes indirect emissions associated with our value chain. IVC Evidensia utilises company data from several sources to facilitate the calculation of Scope 3 emissions. Category 1 Purchased Goods and Services, Category 2 Capital Goods, Category 4 Upstream Transport and Distribution, Category 5 Waste Generated in Operations and Category 6 Business Travel are calculated using a spend-based approach. Emissions for Category 12 End-of-Life Treatment of Sold Products are calculated utilising sales volumes from the UK market and extrapolated to cover the Group based on revenue. Defra UK Government GHG Conversion Factors for Company Reporting 2023 for Household Residual Waste emission factor was applied to volumes assumed to be taken home by customers.

Note: The Group publishes separate GHG reporting for our UK business in accordance with the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) regulations. This is available in the IVC Acquisitions Midco Limited Annual Report and Accounts 2023.

Cutting our Scope 1 and 2 emissions

Building emissions

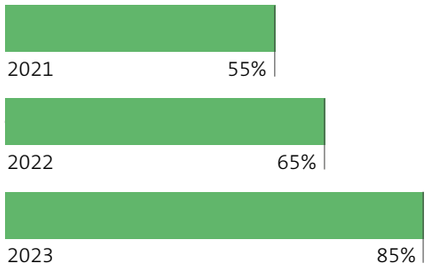
Renewable electricity procurement is central to our strategy for reducing the emissions associated with heating and lighting our clinics, hospitals, offices and crematoria. We have continued to make progress and now source 85% of Group electricity from renewable sources. We are working with our landlords in a number of countries to assess the opportunities to install solar panels on the roof of our clinics and generate our own renewable energy. During the year, our team in the Netherlands has continued to work with our landlords to install solar panels, with 25 now powered by solar energy, up from 19 last year.

477

UK clinics with energy-efficient upgrades

Improving the energy efficiency of our clinics makes both environmental and commercial sense. In the UK, we have continued our programme of energy-efficiency upgrades with LED lighting and Building Management Systems now installed at 477 clinics, with a typical clinic achieving impressive savings of around 40% for electricity consumption and 22% for gas. Energy audits have also been undertaken in the Netherlands, Sweden and France to identify the opportunities to improve efficiency. In France, 74 clinics now have LED lighting. In Sweden, our clinic in Lund made the switch to LED, which is estimated to save just over 31,000 kWh per year and we have plans to extend this to more Swedish sites.

Group renewable electricity procurement (% of total electricity purchased)



LOOKING FORWARD

Building energy efficiency will remain a focus in the year ahead with upgrades scheduled for 350 further UK clinics, and plans to extend LED and building management system projects to clinics across Sweden, France and the Netherlands, with other country teams actively looking at the opportunities. Landlord partnerships on solar PV installation will also continue, with a focus on potential opportunities in Spain and Portugal.

"In a typical UK clinic, building energy-efficiency measures are achieving impressive savings of around 40% for electricity consumption and 22% for gas."

Anaesthetic gases

Anaesthesia is a vital aspect of our patient care, enabling crucial and life-saving surgeries and diagnostic procedures. However, we acknowledge that waste anaesthetic gases significantly contribute to our Scope 1 greenhouse gas emissions.

To address this, we've established a Low Carbon Anaesthesia Working Group, comprising senior clinical colleagues from across the Group, to focus on identifying opportunities to minimise the environmental impact of these agents. Our initial efforts involve expanding training in low flow anaesthetic techniques, supported by resources from renowned anaesthetists in the UK and Sweden.

Additionally, we are investing in new clinical equipment where necessary. Transitioning to lower flow techniques should decrease the amount of anaesthetic agent used, offering environmental benefits while maintaining or enhancing the safety and quality of anaesthesia for both patients and clinical staff.

The widespread adoption of lower flow techniques will be a key focus in the year ahead, with close monitoring of progress by our Medical Leadership team for whom it is a core KPI measure. Looking further to the future, the Low Carbon Anaesthesia Working Group will continue to research and assess other routes to lower carbon anaesthesia, including a transition to anaesthetic gases that have lower GHG emissions and the trial of waste gas capture technologies.

"Work to decarbonise our business requires engagement from teams across our international business as we research lower carbon solutions, build business cases and plan trials."

Drivers for our Veternity crematorium business display an Eco-Conduite sticker on their vehicles to show they have completed training in fuel-efficient driving.

Delivering a low carbon fleet

Our vehicle fleet accounts for 16% of our Scope 1 and 2 emissions. The majority of travel is by our farm and equine vets, who can travel long distances to reach their patients and clients, and by our crematorium drivers, who again travel long distances to service their veterinary clients.

We are undertaking a gradual transition of our fleet to vehicles with lower emissions, including hybrid and electric. In the Netherlands, following the adoption of a new low carbon vehicle policy, 30% of new car leases were for electric or hybrid vehicles compared to 10% in 2022.

We are also training our teams on how to use their existing vehicles more efficiently, through improved driving techniques and through better route planning to cut unnecessary travel. This year, 140 drivers for our French crematorium business, Veternity, have taken part in fuel-efficient driving training, covering topics including vehicle maintenance, anticipation, using gears to brake and changing gears quickly. It is estimated that the training could save over 8% in fuel consumption. We are also trialling similar training for our Chapelfield Equine clinic in the UK, with a view to a possible rollout to more of our farm and equine clinics.

Reducing the impact of crematorium operations

The transition of our crematorium business to a lower carbon operating model will be a key part of delivering our Scope 1 and 2 emissions targets.

This is a significant undertaking, with the first step to improve the operational efficiency of the existing crematorium process to reduce carbon emissions. Our VetSpeed crematoriums in the UK have continued to deliver significant savings through staff energy-efficiency training. This has translated into reductions of GHG emissions in excess of 17% year on year. The learnings from such initiatives are shared with crematorium teams in other countries to support their efficiency programmes.

In the years ahead, our focus will move to research and investment in more efficient and lower emission crematorium technologies. This work is being led by an international project group, taking advantage of our international presence to share learnings and opportunities. We will continue to work closely with suppliers to evaluate the various options available.

17%

year-on-year reduction in process fuel consumption at our UK crematoriums

Working with suppliers to reduce shared climate impact

The majority of our GHG footprint sits within Scope 3, and specifically within the pharmaceutical supply chain.

During the year, we launched our Supply Chain Engagement Programme, working in partnership with our key suppliers, and supporting them to develop and work towards science-based targets. We have been encouraged by the positive discussions so far, demonstrating how much of a priority this topic is for so many of our suppliers. Our focus, to date, has been working with our pharmaceutical suppliers. Over 90% of pharmaceutical suppliers by gross spend have committed to set science-based targets by June 2025. We will continue to work with suppliers across our supply chain to make further progress in the years ahead.

Over

90%

of pharmaceutical suppliers (by gross spend) committed to set science-based targets by June 2025

Responsible procurement

Our procurement decisions focus on selecting products that enable us to provide the best possible care for the animals we treat at our clinics and hospitals, but we also seek to ensure we purchase from suppliers who share our commitment to sustainability.

We collaborate with suppliers to reduce resource use, waste and pollution linked to our products. A minor change in a high-volume item, such as syringes (over 7 million used annually in our UK and European clinics), can yield significant savings. Transitioning to BD Emerald syringes, using 30% less plastic and non-toxic materials, has saved over 3 tonnes of plastic and clinical waste in the past year.

"During the year, in the UK alone we have seen the use of buster collars fall by 23%, reducing the volume of plastic used by 7.5 tonnes."

Another commonly used product is the plastic buster collar provided to many of our patients after a surgical procedure. We now offer a range of reusable alternatives, such as medical pet shirts and protective limb sleeves, which are often preferable for patient well-being as they do not interrupt peripheral vision. During the year, in the UK alone we have seen the use of buster collars fall by 23%, reducing the volume of plastic used by 7.5 tonnes.

Maintaining high hygiene standards is a priority within our infection prevention protocols. We reviewed the chemicals we used last year, transitioning from eco-toxic chemicals to material science cleaning, employing low microplastic-shedding microfibre products in suitable clinic areas and replacing single-use wipes with microfibre cloths. This change benefits our clinic teams' well-being and reduces daily chemical usage.

Chemical-free cleaning is widely used in our Swedish clinics. We conducted a trial in 12 UK clinics this year, creating a group to share experiences and support others transitioning to this new hygiene method. The UK trial yielded over 50% reduction in chemical disinfectant usage in a typical clinic. Next year, we aim to expand this initiative across our clinics, providing training and substantial equipment investment.

86%

of the packaging for our own-brand products is now recyclable, compostable or reusable

We know that our clinic teams are passionate about sustainability and want to have the information to choose products that are better for the environment or responsibly sourced. During the year, we have been working with our wholesaler, IMS Euro, to develop a set of green flags that provide our teams with information on the sustainability credentials of the products in our wholesale catalogue. This will be trialled in the UK early in 2024 and we hope to roll out similar labelling systems to other countries.

Green flags provide our UK teams with information on the sustainability credentials of the products in our wholesale catalogue.

Own-Brand Responsible Sourcing Principles

Packaging	Environmental impact	Animal welfare
Packaging to be 100% compostable or recyclable, with improved circularity of packaging materials.	Paper and cardboard packaging to be from certified sustainably managed forests and work to maintain and conserve biodiversity, including ensuring ingredients are from certified 'deforestation-free' sources.	High standards of animal welfare, referring to the internationally recognised 'Five Freedoms' as a minimum standard.
Aquaculture and wild fisheries	**Manufacturing**	**Human rights**
Fish to be sustainably sourced through appropriate independent certification schemes.	Sustainable manufacturing processes, for example use of renewable energy and zero waste to landfill policies.	People involved in our supply chain to receive fair and ethical treatment, in line with the International Labour Organization Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

LOOKING FORWARD

When sourcing products for our own-brand products ranges, we seek to partner with suppliers who share our commitment to sustainability. We expect our suppliers to ensure ethical and environmentally responsible sourcing and manufacturing practices, and to reduce the impacts associated with ingredients, products and services we buy.

During the year, we have been working closely with our suppliers in pursuit of our target for our own-brand packaging* to be recyclable, compostable or reusable by 2025. 86% of our packaging now meets this standard.

We have also defined our own-brand responsible sourcing principles (below) to outline the specific sustainability standards we want to meet. A commitment to traceability underpins these principles, and we will work with our suppliers to understand and improve the trackability of raw materials and the production process. In the year ahead, we will communicate these principles to our suppliers and work with them to develop plans to deliver continuous improvement in sustainability.

* Excluding pharmaceutical and nutraceutical products.

Resource efficiency

Minimising our waste footprint is a key priority for us, and a topic that we know is also a real passion for many of our clinical colleagues.

Some of the waste from our clinical operations is classified as hazardous and governed by strict regulations over its disposal. We focus our efforts on reducing our non-hazardous waste, working towards a goal of zero waste to landfill and increasing the proportion of waste that is recycled. As part of this, we are also working to develop solutions for hard-to-recycle materials.

National waste management reviews have been carried out in Sweden, the Netherlands, France and Canada, with agreements now in place with national contractors to deliver waste management and dry mix recycling services for our clinics. In some locations, waste collections are controlled by landlords or local councils, making it harder for us to influence waste management processes; however, we are committed to centralising waste management wherever we can to measure waste volumes and drive improvements.

In the Netherlands, we produced a waste guide to help all of our clinics properly split their waste and improve our recycling rates in the year ahead.

In the UK, we collaborated with our waste contractor to increase the number of clinics separating their waste for recycling. We achieved zero waste to landfill this year, recycling 34% of non-hazardous waste. Enhancing this rate will be a focus in the upcoming year. In August, a waste audit was conducted to assess compliance with dry mix recycling guidelines and to identify materials in general waste bins that could be recycled through specialised schemes. The audit revealed large amounts of soft plastic sterile medical packaging from high-hygiene products such as syringes, bandages and surgical tools. In the coming months, we will partner with select Positive Pawprint clinics for a trial to create a separate recycling stream for this soft plastic. If successful, we aim to expand this initiative to a broader range of clinics.

In France, soft plastic recycling is in place in 16 clinics, accepting products including masks, gowns, overshoes, surgical drapes, sterilisation bags, sterile plastic packaging, empty bottles and collars. Some French clinics also have partnerships with associations who collect and recycle plastic bottle caps including syringe caps, for example Clinique Hel'Vet, who collect needle caps and send them to Bouchons 74, a charity that recycles this plastic and then financially helps people with disabilities who need medical equipment.

In October 2022, we launched a recycling scheme for medical blister packs. During the year, 19 UK clinics have taken part with over 450kg of blister packs collected. Our recycling partner, ReWorked, uses the material collected, PVC and aluminium separated and the plastic used to make items such as waiting room fittings and pharmacy shelving. In the year ahead, we plan to extend the scheme to more UK clinics and into other large markets.

"Soft plastic recycling is in place in 16 clinics in France, with a trial planned in the UK for 2024."

In Canada, three clinics in Ontario participated in a waste reduction trial, using a FoodCycler to divert scraps and food material that had previously been placed in their garbage, with 485kg of organic material diverted from landfill and turned into nutrient-rich soil over a three-month period.

In the year ahead, we will continue to improve measurement of waste volumes across our markets and focus on promoting recycling, especially of the specialist waste streams generated from our clinical activities.

Zero

waste to landfill achieved in our UK business

Our UK events team is committed to reducing wastage and using recycled and recyclable materials. Our stands are stored in a central location to cut unnecessary transit emissions, and 100% of stand materials are recycled. At our Leaders Forum, guest and supplier travel was offset and carbon neutral accreditation achieved.

Promoting biodiversity

Our care for animals reaches beyond just the patients we treat, but is also part of a wider commitment to protect and support wildlife, biological diversity and natural habitats. We impact biodiversity at a local level through the way we manage the land around our clinics and hospitals, but also through the advice we give to our clients and through the responsible use of pharmaceuticals. In the coming years, we plan to develop these initiatives into a wider strategy to manage nature-related risks and opportunities.

Responsible use of eco-toxic chemicals

Parasite control treatments form an important part of the care we provide to our animal patients, supporting our commitment to maintain high welfare standards, while also protecting public health where zoonotic disease potential is apparent. At the same time, our Clinical Boards are conscious of our role in promoting responsible use of these products to ensure their continued efficacy and to protect the environment from unnecessary exposure to eco-toxic chemicals.

Our Clinical Boards continue to work to provide our small animal clinical teams with detailed guidance to support a benefit-risk assessment to ensure responsible parasiticide stewardship, while maintaining excellent welfare standards for pets.

“Through investment in automated faecal-egg-counting machines, our farm vets are able to provide improved advice on responsible anthelmintic use.”

Responsible use of anthelmintics is a core part of the advice our farm vets provide to their clients. In the UK, traditionally the farming community has purchased wormers from the local agricultural merchants, rather than the vet. During the year, we have provided refresher training to ensure all our farm/mixed vets have the latest knowledge around products and the science behind them. We have invested in automated faecal egg counting machines (currently in use in 18 clinics) to provide rapid diagnostic support for anthelmintic decision-making, allowing quicker results to be delivered to the vet and the farmer. This enables our vets to advise on the use of wormers within a whole farm strategy, with special focus on sustainability, soil quality and concerns around building resistance.

Promoting biodiversity locally

The amount of land around our clinics and hospitals varies significantly, with some having a lot of green space and others almost none; however, we recognise that in all of our locations, we can take some small steps to enhance local biodiversity. As well as providing an important lifeline to wildlife, we know that improving the natural environment around the clinic can also enhance staff well-being.

Our Positive Pawprint Toolkit provides tips and case studies on the simple steps that can be taken to enhance local biodiversity. During the year, we partnered with VetSustain on a webinar giving additional guidance on this topic. We also have a number of country-level initiatives to promote biodiversity:

Our VetStrategy business in Canada runs a national campaign every year to promote good mental health. As part of this year’s campaign, in May, VetStrategy provided wildflower seeds to all clinics to add colour and biodiversity to their gardens. Exposure to nature has been linked to a host of benefits, including improved attention, lower stress, better mood, and increase in empathy and cooperation.

Many of our crematoriums have green areas around the site. To promote biodiversity in these areas, we provided our French Veternity sites with a catalogue of biodiversity-enhancing items from which they could choose to purchase. This included insect hotels, hedgehog shelters and bird tables.

A hedgehog shelter at Faulquemont crematorium, France.

In the UK, our partnership with the British Bee Veterinary Association (BBVA) aims to help our clinics take simple actions to support local bee populations as well as spreading awareness throughout their local area. In May, 50 of the UK clinics that are working on the Positive Pawprint Toolkit were awarded membership of the BBVA. Membership provides guidance on improving habitats for pollinators through initiatives such as bee hotels and pollinator-friendly planting. The scheme also encourages clinics to share advice with clients and throughout their local community.

“VetStrategy provided wildflower seeds to all clinics to promote biodiversity and also colleague well-being.”

One such clinic receiving the membership is Terrington Vets, which has transformed the outside space at the clinic into a welcoming area for both staff and local wildlife to enjoy. They have included bee-friendly planting, fruit and vegetables and have even found new uses for waste such as a discarded BBQ lid that became a planter and old pallets that became a bird house.

Promoting biodiversity at Terrington Vets, UK.

Caring for Patients

In this section

36 Caring for our customers
37 Professional governance and external affairs
37 Quality care for pets
40 Affordability and accessibility
41 Protecting patient welfare
43 Infection prevention and control (IPC)
46 Innovative health solutions

Our commitments:

- Deliver the highest possible standards of care, quality and safety
- Continually share knowledge, incidents and best practice
- Promote and innovate integrated animal solutions
- Collaborate with peers to innovate best practice on antimicrobial resistance
- Offer the highest standards of client care and communication

Relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals

Relevant policies

- IVC Evidensia Ethical Statement

Our key achievements:

Further progress to reduce outpatient antibiotic prescriptions, down 12% year on year in the Netherlands, 16% in the UK and 27% in Norway.

Wellness Screening completed for over 4,500 dogs and cats, with around 95% of patient screenings identifying hidden underlying illness requiring further testing and/or treatment.

259 research projects being undertaken by IVC Evidensia teams, led by 141 researchers in 12 countries.

Our targets

To treat 3,500 patients per year, using the IVC Evidensia Care Fund by 2025 (revised target)

To reduce the total number of surgical site infections, as a percentage of dogs and cats neutered to 5% by 2025

To ensure that 75% of our clinics have species-specific waiting room facilities by 2030 (revised target)

To reduce the total number of antibiotic treatments and prescriptions as a % of total outpatient consultations to 5% by 2030

To appoint a dedicated Infection Prevention and Control Ambassador to 75% of our clinics by 2025

Across our network of almost 2,500 locations, our veterinary teams are collectively responsible for the care of over 9.7 million patients each year, which is more than 30 per minute.

Our dedicated small animal vets and vet nurses look after a wide spread of dog and cat breeds, as well as other domestic and exotic pets. Our equine vets care for both working and leisure horses, while our farm animal teams care for large numbers of herd animals, both to maintain their health and well-being, and to help ensure meat that enters the human food chain is free of disease or infection. Across this wide range of patients, the uniting theme is the commitment of our veterinary teams to provide outstanding care to our patients and outstanding service to their owners, in line with our purpose of Healthy Animals, Happy Owners.

Our KPIs

KPI	Metric	Scope of data	Our performance 2023	2022
Access and affordability	Number of patients treated using the IVC Evidensia Care Fund	Group	5,021	2,793
Complications and outcomes	Total number of surgical site infections of dogs and cats neutered	UK, Sweden, Netherlands	4.2	3.4
Experience of the animal	Percentage of sites with species-specific waiting room facilities	Group	53%	52%
Antibiotic use	Number of antibiotic treatments and prescriptions as a percentage of total outpatient consultations	UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway	9.5	9.9
Infection prevention and control	Percentage of sites with an IPC Ambassador	Group	24%	17%

As the veterinary sector evolves, we are focused on ensuring our clinical teams have access to the most up-to-date equipment and training, and also to the most modern systems and processes, to help ensure patient care is delivered safely and to the highest quality. Embedding a clinical culture that supports continuous learning and collaboration is crucial to this goal. Further, our responsibility to contribute to the development of clinical knowledge and the evolution of the veterinary and veterinary nursing professions, as well as the positive impact our sector has on broader society through our support of One Health, is forefront in our minds.

Our clinical vision

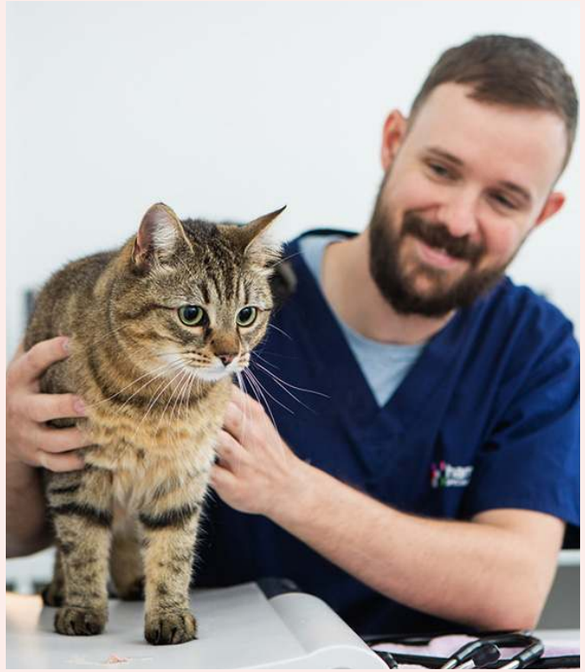
To create an environment where all our veterinary professionals are supported to deliver exceptional veterinary care, having the independence to tailor diagnostics and treatments to the needs of each individual patient and owner.

This freedom is underpinned by an accountable professional culture with the evolving evidence base, a learning culture, inter-professional collaboration in clinically led teams, and the strongest principles of quality improvement at its heart. Through this leadership our teams work collectively to support and improve animal welfare and professional well-being.

To deliver our vision, our clinical strategy and the measures we report here are fundamental. Initiatives are structured across the key domains of professional governance and external affairs, quality improvement, clinical research and innovation, infection prevention and control and animal welfare, underpinned by accessibility of care.

Our Medical Leadership team comprises subject matter experts in each of these domains, who support our Country Medical Directors and their in-market teams to deliver a coordinated programme of initiatives, supporting our teams and our Group to make a positive difference across the sector. Our Clinical Boards remain a strength of our organisation providing vital input from clinicians (both vets and vet nurses) to shape our strategy and its implementation.

The Patient commitments of our Positive Pawprint strategy are integrated into our clinical strategy with progress against our KPIs reviewed monthly by our Medical Leadership team. Extending the scope of the performance data we are able to capture remains a key focus. We are proud of the progress we have made, especially in light of the fact that data quality is continuously becoming more accurate. We have reviewed some of our targets to reflect progress and to continue to stretch ourselves further.



Caring for our customers

Our purpose of Healthy Animals, Happy Owners underpins all that we do. We are committed to providing pets and animals with exceptional care, but at the same time ensuring our customers are treated fairly and with respect.

In some markets, we use data on the Net Promoter Score (NPS) to measure customer satisfaction. This year, the weighted average across the UK, Ireland, Sweden, Norway and Finland stood at 82.2, up from 81.3 last year. We continue to review NPS measures in other markets to develop a common approach across the Group.

Our pet health plans support our engagement with pet owners and also empower owners with knowledge and resources to better care for their pets. We now have more than 850,000 pets registered in the UK, 2,500 in Ireland and 22,000 in the Netherlands.

“A pet enrolled in our Pet Health Club is almost twice as likely to be vaccinated and almost 2.5 times more likely to receive preventive anti-parasitic treatments.”

In the UK, a pet enrolled in our Pet Health Club is almost twice as likely to be vaccinated, with the benefits to health and longevity that brings, as those not on the plan. Similarly, when it comes to preventive anti-parasitic treatments, pets on the plan are almost 2.5 times more likely to receive these crucial treatments.

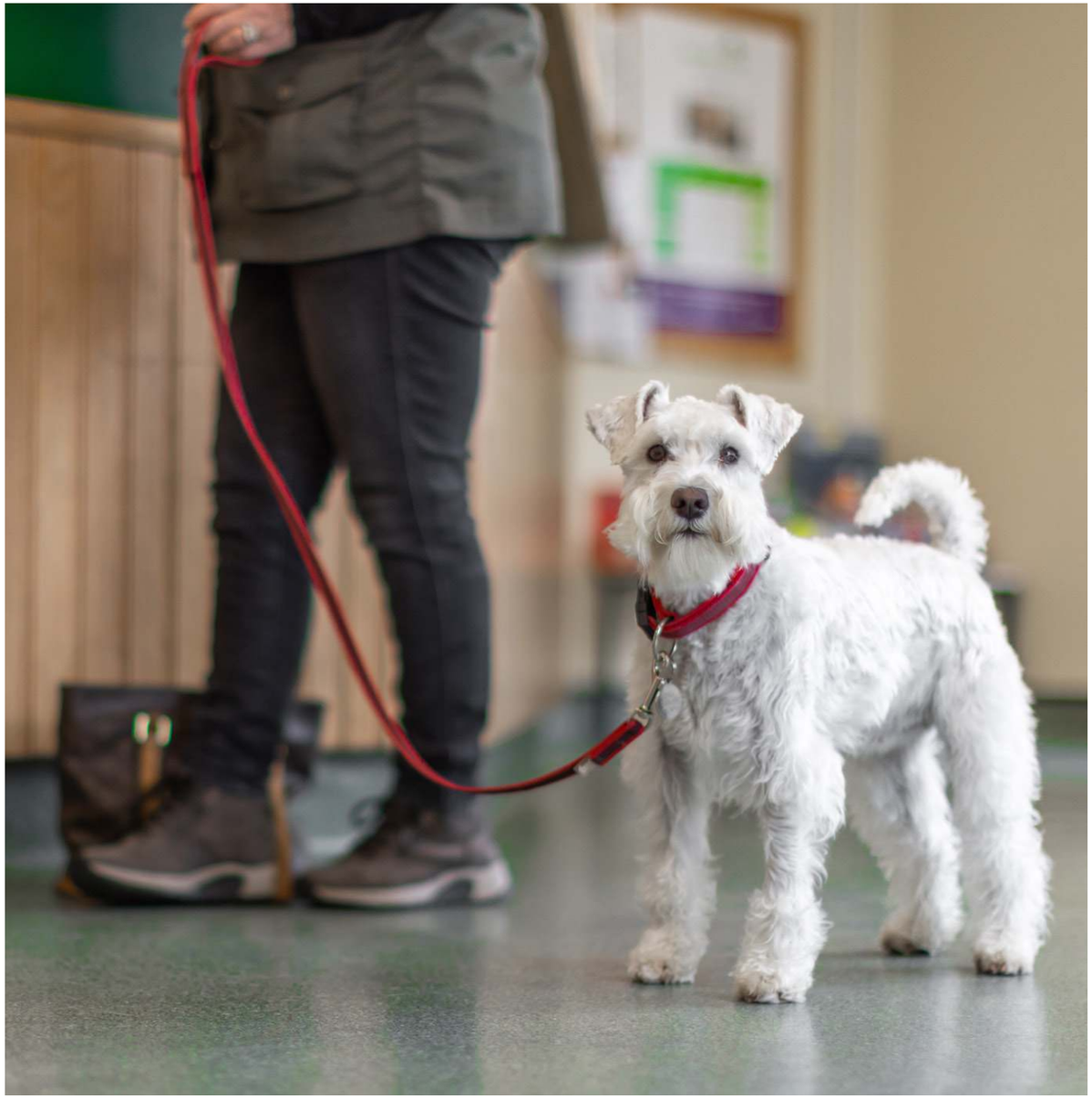
By facilitating regular vaccinations and anti-parasitic treatments, we’re aiding in early diagnosis and treatment, and promoting a healthier pet community. The structured spread of healthcare costs also makes pet healthcare more affordable for owners, and the focus on ongoing well-being helps to avoid sudden, unexpected treatment costs. Our aim is to extend the plan’s reach to more pet owners globally over the coming years.

This year, we introduced Wellness Screenings in the UK as a proactive step towards early detection of potential health issues in cats and dogs. These comprehensive medical MOTs help our vets identify subclinical diseases before symptoms appear, aiding in timely intervention and promoting longer, happier and healthier lives for pets under our care.

We continue to work to make our services easier and more convenient for our customers to access and have introduced online appointments and digital apps in the UK and Sweden. In the year ahead, we will invite clients across the UK to create their accounts on our digital app, aiming to offer digital accounts to all UK clients by the end of the financial year 2024.

We continue to offer telephone and online veterinary consultations through PawSquad and Video Vets Now in the UK, and Evidensia Djursjukvård and Evidensia MinVeterinär in Sweden.

Tick season in Sweden results in a rise in pet owners seeking advice and treatment around tick-borne diseases. This year, we introduced online consultations to cater for this demand, providing a quick, user-friendly solution. With a five-minute appointment via an app on their phone, clients could discuss their concerns with a vet. Post-consultation, they receive a link to order the necessary medication from our pharmacy, complete with free shipping. The number of customers using this service increased by 36% year on year and we now aim to expand and improve the service, making veterinary care during this period even more accessible and convenient for pet owners in Sweden.



Professional governance and external affairs

During 2023, our core clinical policy training tools were launched using a phased approach across all markets, with early phase markets already showing uptake of over 85% across clinical staff.

This training supports our teams to stay up to date and compliant with key national veterinary professional regulatory guidance, and is updated as guidance changes, for example during implementation of the updated Under Care regulations in the UK.

As the profession evolves, we contribute proactively to working groups and feed into consultations across all our markets, particularly supporting the evolution of regulations underpinning the veterinary nursing profession, which vary significantly by country.

Considering the wider impact of animal health and the veterinary sector on human health and the environment, we have set up a One Health Working Group. This pulls expertise from across our markets, with the goal being to horizon scan, ensuring we are aware of and proactive about emerging issues in the One Health space.

We take our responsibility to contribute to wider policy discussions seriously. An example is our recent work to support evidence-based and thoughtful discussions on the challenges occurring in society due to the rise in popularity of certain dog breeds, especially XL Bullies.

Across the UK, we have seen a rise in the number of serious and fatal dog attacks perpetrated on both other animals and people, with the number of dog attacks reported up 22% over the last two years and, tragically, some fatalities. As a result, our Welfare team has been actively working with other specialists to prepare detailed guidance for senior police officers investigating these attacks, as well as providing our data and insight to the Government. We have highlighted that there is no simple solution and that a multifactorial response will be required.

Quality care for pets

"Quality improvement is the cornerstone of our commitment to providing the best possible care, tailored to animals and their owners. It's a dynamic process that empowers every team member to continuously assess, innovate and elevate our standards. By engaging in quality improvement activities such as clinical audit, the use of checklists, guidelines and other tools, our teams are actively contributing to a legacy of clinical excellence.

Together, we are not just shaping the future of quality veterinary care; we are defining it."

Laura Playforth
GROUP QUALITY IMPROVEMENT DIRECTOR

In the ever-evolving landscape of veterinary medicine, we recognise that our commitment to being leaders in the global veterinary field hinges on our unwavering dedication to continuously developing and improving the quality of our services and our care.

Over the past year, our veterinary quality projects have crossed borders and connected with diverse teams, all driven by the common goal to improve the quality of care we provide to the animals entrusted to us. Our improvement strategy uses our global scale along with the wealth of experience and expertise within our teams to deliver unprecedented improvements – continuing to develop and embed QI processes and tools throughout our countries to change the lives of thousands of patients.

Sharing successes

Our teams expressed a need for a platform to share innovative ideas, successful projects and practical tips. In response, we established a QI Hub on our Group intranet, accessible to all team members. This platform allows us to share projects across all our countries, covering a wide range of topics such as pain scoring, dispensing errors, incidence of grass seeds and antibiotic usage in dental procedures.

In addition to sharing projects and successes, teams can access our tailored QI courses developed by leading veterinary QI experts. These courses include the QI Foundational course, induction, project support, clinical case discussion guidance and, new for 2024, a benchmarking course. Currently, 121 individuals have completed the QI Foundational course, with 139 active learners currently enrolled.

CASE STUDY

Improving practice in lambing and caesareans

The team at Scarsdale Vets in the UK initiated a lambing and caesarean section audit, which led to significant changes in antibiotic use, pain management, anaesthetic safety and infection control.

This project was subsequently successfully scaled up by the Sheep Clinical Working Group (SCWG), led by Rachel Forster, to involve 21 clinics in the first audit cycle in 2021/22. The tools and processes developed went on to win a coveted RCVS Knowledge Quality Improvement Award and were widely lauded both within and outside the company.

A follow-up survey was undertaken in the 2022/23 lambing season, with 39% of respondents reporting a change in the way they practice, including a 56% decrease in the prescription of second-line antibiotics and a 40% reduction in the volume of local anaesthetic used for regional anaesthesia during each caesarean.

We are introducing a new concept in veterinary care called a Care Bundle, a well-established concept in human-centred healthcare but relatively new in veterinary practice. Our aim is to create a concise and comprehensive set of recommended practices for specific conditions or issues.

We are starting with ear inflammation (otitis externa) in dogs, a chronic and painful condition affecting approximately 11% of all dogs. Care Bundles, widely regarded as the most effective QI tool in human healthcare, will be launched internationally across all our countries in 2024. This project represents a collaborative effort on a global scale.

The primary aim of Care Bundles is to equip veterinary teams with a practical tool that supports best practice and fosters a holistic approach to managing a health challenge.

The aim is to:

- Improve Patient Care by giving clear, succinct recommendations based on evidence and practical usability
- Empower veterinary teams to deliver optimal care, thereby increasing job satisfaction
- Elevate client service by offering comprehensive and effective solutions, underpinned by the most up-to-date knowledge
- Play a pivotal role in curbing the inappropriate use of antimicrobials, aligning with global efforts to combat antimicrobial resistance

The IVC Evidensia Care Bundle Initiative for otitis externa marks a significant step forward in our commitment to QI. By providing our veterinary teams across all our countries with this valuable resource, we empower them to deliver the highest standards of care, ensure client satisfaction and contribute to the global effort to combat antimicrobial resistance.

Patient safety

Reporting and analysing patient safety incidents is relatively new in veterinary care but significantly impacts the profession. Learning from these incidents enhances staff well-being, promotes transparency and supports continuous improvement. Healthcare professionals who feel supported in reporting are more likely to stay in their roles, boosting retention rates and nurturing a culture of psychological safety, where all team members can voice safety concerns and contribute to improvements.

These systems also enhance patient care by identifying and addressing potential risks, ultimately improving treatment outcomes and satisfaction for both patients and their owners. In veterinary medicine, just as in human healthcare, data-driven incident reporting is a cornerstone of a safer, more effective and sustainable industry. Finally, robust incident reporting systems are essential for commercial success, as they reduce the risk of costly legal actions and damage to reputation.

We are currently trialling the rollout of a bespoke Patient Safety Incident reporting system as part of our global health and safety platform. This platform facilitates a unified approach across all countries – unique within the veterinary professions – allowing a consistent approach to incident reporting across the entire Group. Incident and data analysis will enable us to unpick context-specific contributory factors and address them through the review of existing processes and development of unique QI tools. We are then able to develop guidance and training to support staff in successfully addressing these incidents and reducing further safety incidents in the future: safeguarding patients, owners and our teams.

CASE STUDY

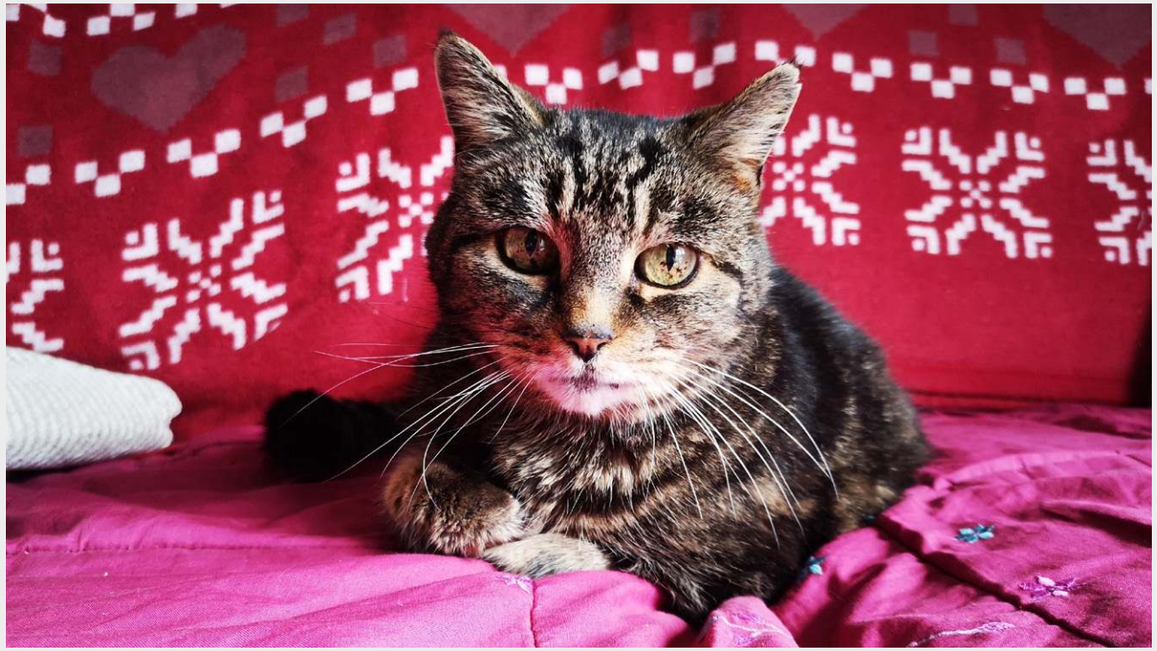
Identifying underlying illnesses through Wellness Screening

Wellness Screening launched in the UK in November 2022 and has seen over 4,500 screens for dogs and cats successfully completed across the UK. Around 95% of patient screenings identify hidden underlying illness requiring further testing and/or treatment. These patients appear completely normal to their owners and the clinical team and so issues are picked up months, or even years, earlier, enabling successful interventions leading to longer, happier lives and peace of mind for their owners.

Molly, a 16-year-old cat underwent screening at Mill House Vets and it was discovered that she had an overactive thyroid. Treatment was swiftly initiated, and her condition is now under control without any symptoms ever being displayed.

Ami, a Senior Veterinary Nurse at Mill House, speaks about her pride in the Wellness Screening programme:

"Wellness Screenings are something we truly enjoy. It's not just about treating illnesses; it's about preventing them, too. Identifying issues like hyperthyroidism early on, as we did with Molly, is immensely satisfying because it allows us to provide timely care and improve the quality of life for our patients."



Over 4,500 dogs and cats, like Molly (pictured), have benefitted from Wellness Screening.

Benchmarking

Capturing clinical data within our clinics and the global veterinary industry allows us to create benchmarks around key areas. These benchmarks allow teams to identify best practice and areas for potential improvement, and facilitate clinical decision-making to improve patient outcomes. This, in turn, enables targeted support and improvement efforts through the application of tailored learning resources, and tools specific to each team's needs.

Existing benchmarks operating within our Group include Wellness Screening, ear inflammation (otitis externa) in dogs, blood pressure measurement in cats, post-surgical complications and antimicrobial usage. In each of these cases we can use data from across the sector on disease prevalence and review the level to which we engage.

LOOKING FORWARD

Plans for the coming year include developing benchmarking parameters and tools in dental disease, which affects 80% of dogs and cats over the age of three years, pain management in chronic conditions such as osteoarthritis in dogs, launching a minimum of one clinical benchmark into each country and extending our Wellness Screening programme across an additional four countries.

Affordability and accessibility

As a large veterinary group, we are highly aware of the effect that the cost-of-living crisis is having on our clients and the importance of ensuring that our services are affordable and accessible to our clients. We are incredibly proud of our Care Fund, which provides a unique resource to our clinic teams. Wherever they are based in our international business, our teams are able to offer clients who are in financial crisis immediate financial support where their pet would otherwise have to be euthanised.

When we launched the Care Fund in 2021, our initial goal was to support 1,500 clients annually by 2025. This goal was rapidly exceeded. Support from the Care Fund has allowed us to save the lives of over 5,000 pets in 2023, allowing them to access essential and life-saving cutting-edge veterinary care from our highly skilled teams. We have revised our target upwards for the year ahead to reflect a higher level of support for clients and their pets.

This year, we have launched a UK-wide charity discount programme, offering significant discounts to all our charity clients, no matter their size. We have also partnered with some of the major charity groups to provide training for our teams in pragmatic medicine, allowing us to devise affordable solutions for clients whose animal is unwell and requires our care, but are limited financially. By working with the clients and understanding their budget, we create treatment plans that protect animal welfare while at the same time being affordable for the client.

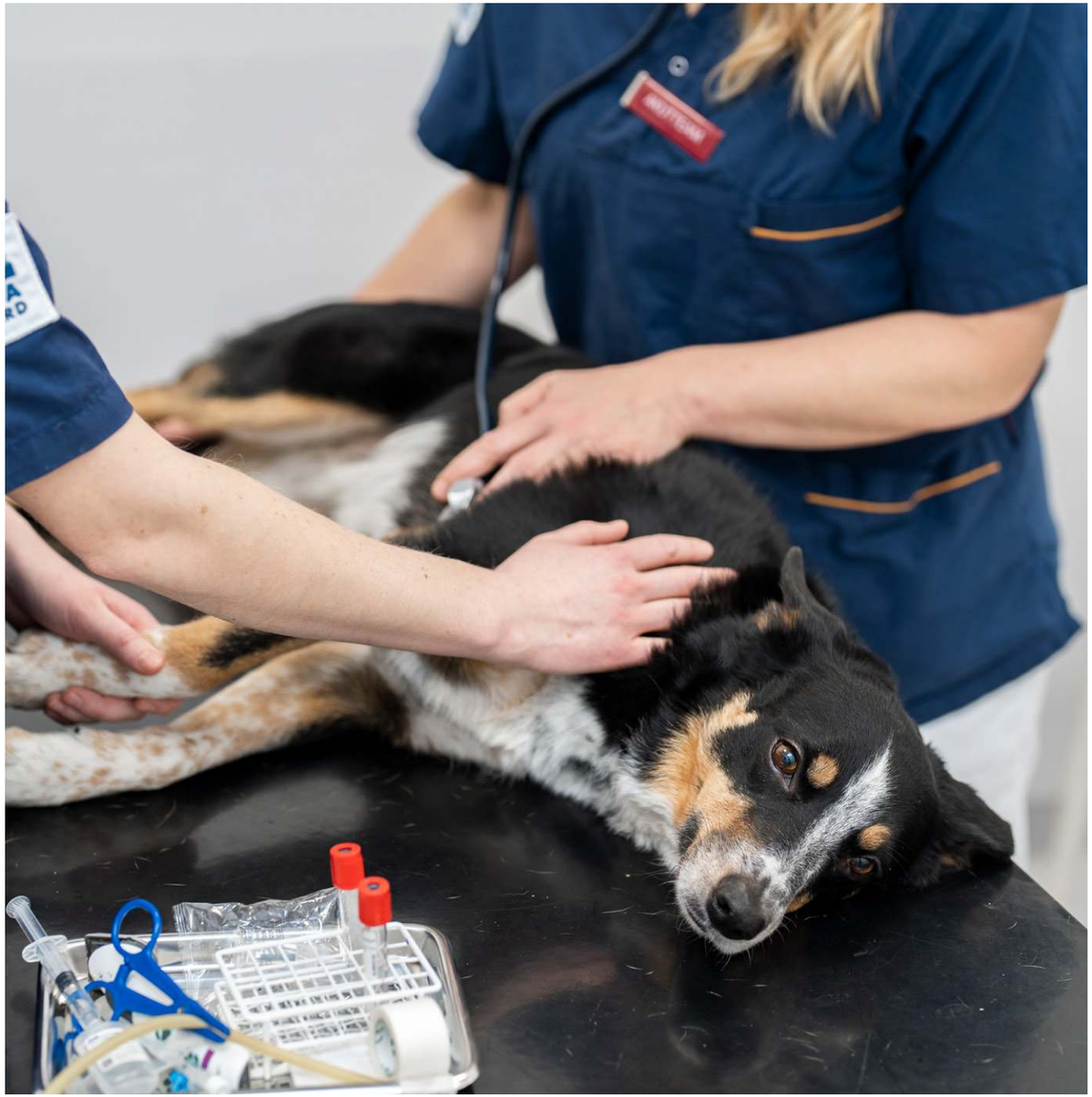
5,021

pets were saved through the Care Fund this year

We partner directly with national charities such as the Dogs Trust on avoiding unnecessary euthanasia. We also partner with the Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals on an outreach project ensuring that vulnerable people who may have difficulty accessing veterinary care, for example due to a lack of transport or their own health and mobility issues, can obtain veterinary care for their pets where and when they need it. We recognise that veterinary social care is an expanding field, and we want to work with other organisations and charities to ensure that we, wherever possible, support vulnerable people to keep their pets, while protecting the welfare of those pets at the same time.

LOOKING FORWARD

We will continue to strive to lead the way in engagement with the charity sector to ensure that we create innovative solutions to provide veterinary care when and where it is needed. As a Group, we will expand the work we have been doing in the UK to other markets sharing best practice and working collaboratively.



Protecting patient welfare

Animal welfare is at the heart of everything we do. Whether our patients present for preventive healthcare advice, or when unwell and requiring treatment, our goal is to maximise and improve patient welfare and support owners in obtaining the best possible outcome for their animal.

We have set ourselves the target of being the leading corporate Group in animal welfare, and we continue to lead the way, whether that be through our Care Fund or the work we do in protecting the most vulnerable animals who have been deliberately abused.

We recognise that, for many animals, a trip to the vets is not something they enjoy. This can make owners nervous, potentially leading to delays in bringing animals in, and resulting in more extensive care than if they had been presented sooner. We have continued to work closely with our teams to improve the experience of both our patients and our clients when they attend one of our clinics, with a target to provide species-specific waiting facilities in 50% of clinics by 2030. As a Group we have already exceeded that target reaching a Group-wide average of 53% of our waiting rooms providing species-specific facilities. As such, we are looking to re-set our target for species-specific facilities to 75% by 2030.

We recognise that the experience of our patients goes further than the facilities we provide in our waiting rooms, and we are constantly looking to improve our consulting rooms and hospitalisation facilities. Additionally, we are providing advanced training to our teams in stress-free handling, and identifying pets that may need more support, so that we can ensure that we make each visit to the clinic as comfortable as we possibly can.

CASE STUDY

Improving the patient experience in our clinics

Käpälämäki Clinic in Finland works closely with local animal charities, often treating nervous dogs and cats. The waiting room is quiet with calming music, the walls painted relaxing colours. A separate cat waiting room has climbing areas.

For dogs, there is a non-slip floor, private booths to wait in and a smell wall to reduce anxiety. Inside the clinic there is a room, furnished like a living room, for clients to spend time with nervous patients during longer treatments to reduce anxiety and improve treatment outcomes. Staff are all fear-free trained and also trained to talk quietly and calmly to relax their patients.

Flagship Hofheim Referral Hospital in Germany demonstrates the benefits of ensuring a stress-free pet experience. The whole clinic has been constructed to minimise fear and stress in patients. They have dedicated waiting areas inside the clinic for different species, but also a quiet area where nervous dogs can wait away from the rest of the patients. Clients are provided with places that pet carriers can be placed off the floor and blankets and towels are available to cover a pet carrier if needed.

Consultation rooms have been designed with large window sills for cats to sit and look out while their owners are talking to the vet. Shelves and hidey holes are also provided so that nervous cats have places that they can feel safe in. Within the main hospital a dedicated feline suite has been created including cattery, intensive care, isolation and dedicated theatre space allowing the needs of the cats to be properly met bespoke depending on the needs of the individual cat.

We are actively using these great examples of best practice to inform our development decisions when investing in building new clinics or refurbishing existing facilities, with the mental needs of the pet considered at every step from planning to completion.

More than

2,000

QR code stickers distributed at London Vet Show prompting a significant increase in contacts for 24/7 support from our Welfare team

While the vast majority of our patients are extremely well cared for and much-loved, we do on occasion see patients where there is a serious compromise in the welfare of an animal, be that from ignorance or intentional abuse. As a Group, we stand up for animal welfare, and support welfare organisations and the police in investigating serious animal neglect and abuse.

Our Welfare team provides expert advice and support in a large number of welfare prosecutions resulting in both animals and people being safeguarded. We have also developed and provided training across the globe, including training government vets in Malaysia and contributing to the UN investigation into the links between animal abuse and human violence.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the UK, where we have introduced a flagship project to support the whole veterinary industry, regardless of the organisation, with the identification and reporting of potential Non-Accidental Injuries (NAI) in veterinary patients. We supplied more than 2,000 QR code stickers to veterinary teams across the whole profession at London Vet Show, providing the contact details of our support, prompting an exponential growth in contacts for 24/7 support from our Welfare team.

We have also worked with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to develop a more robust reporting structure, allowing us to refer concerns directly to their newly formed Serious Investigation team, and are now making two to three referrals a week. Much of the detail of this work cannot be directly reported due to confidentiality concerns, but without doubt a significant number of animals have been safeguarded as a direct result. We are also now starting to work with other non-veterinary organisations to ensure that the links between animal abuse and other intra-family violence is recognised, with a particular emphasis on a pilot project to work with MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committees) who support the victims in high-risk domestic violence situations.

Distributing QR codes for the IVC Evidensia Non-Accidental Injury Hotline at London Vet Show.

CASE STUDY

Caring for client and patient welfare

When faced with a client in a desperate situation our team knew what to do. During a routine consultation at one of our UK clinics, a client disclosed that she had been in an abusive relationship for many years and now suddenly had the opportunity for safe housing. The only thing preventing her taking it up was that her beloved dog who had supported her throughout the relationship needed to be neutered and there was no way she could afford the procedure. She was left with a stark choice: move out and leave the dog with her abusive partner, rehome her companion who had supported her through the toughest of times, or stay and put herself at risk.

Due to the availability of the Care Fund, the vet was quickly able to tell the client that there was another way and that we would perform the procedure with the Care Fund meeting the bill. They were also able to explain that, if she needed a couple of days to move into her new home, the clinic would also provide a safe space for the dog for that time, all covered by the Care Fund. As a result, both the client and her beloved dog were able to start a new life in a different part of the country.

LOOKING FORWARD

We have made great progress in identifying and reporting suspicions of abuse and neglect in the UK by providing our teams with the training and support they need and we will continue to expand the support available both within the UK and across the Group.

Infection prevention and control (IPC)

Recently we all experienced the consequences of contagious diseases as we witnessed the impact of COVID-19. There is also an ongoing 'silent pandemic' of antibiotic resistance, causing more than one million deaths a year, according to a recent report in the Lancet.

As we share the same environment, particularly with our pets, human health is impacted by the choices made especially around antimicrobial use in veterinary care. As a world-leading provider of veterinary care, it is our responsibility to be pioneers and actively work to manage infections in a way that protects our patients, their owners, our teams and the wider public.

Our teams save and improve the lives of our patients every day through their exceptional care and a high standard of IPC is critical to this. Since 2020, we have been running our Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) programme, encompassing all the major activities that a modern veterinary clinic should execute to prevent veterinary care associated infections and zoonotic disease, as well as to help decrease antibiotic dependence.

IPC Ambassadors and self-assessment tools

Effective infection control relies heavily on local and national leadership. Our motivated on-site leaders, known as IPC Ambassadors, play a crucial role in this process. Over the past year, we have made significant progress across the Group. Currently, IPC Ambassadors are present in 24% of our small animal and equine clinics. Notably, in countries such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland, we have surpassed our goal of having 75% of clinics with IPC Ambassadors.

In the UK and Ireland, due to our focused efforts in 2023, we have more than doubled the number of clinics with an IPC Ambassador in these countries. This emphasises the importance of local leadership in ensuring high-quality infection control practices.

We have developed a set of self-assessment tools to identify strengths and weaknesses at each clinic or hospital and help prioritisation of IPC activities to optimise their development. Our clinics also have the opportunity to be certified by the country IPC lead. In Sweden, the goal is to have all clinics certified by 2027 and so far, 15% of the Swedish clinics have been certified.

"Everything that we do within hygiene and antibiotic stewardship goes hand in hand and together they help us counteract one of the largest threats to public health – antibiotic resistance. To be able to choose to work without antibiotics, we must improve our infection prevention.

One is a prerequisite for the other. The IPC certification ensures that we, as a company, deliver the quality of care and the patient safety that we want to offer our clients. In addition, it guarantees adherence to our guidelines and ways of working."

Marlene Areskog
COUNTRY MEDICAL DIRECTOR SWEDEN

75%

of clinics with IPC Ambassadors in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland

CASE STUDY

IPC improvement in Sweden

Madelene Holappa, IPC Manager Sweden, reflects on a year of IPC progress: "Looking back on our first year of work with the IPC programme, we can see that it engages a lot of people. Not only from large hospitals but also from a lot of staff working in our smaller and medium-size clinics. And despite being very different in terms of premises, size of team and time allocation, clinics continue to improve. Much of the IPC work depends on well-established policies, procedures and checklists. And that work is something that everyone can achieve, irrespective of prerequisites. It might feel daunting at first, but amazing progress has been witnessed with a limited amount of time dedicated to IPC. To be persistent and make it part of everyday practice is the most important aim.

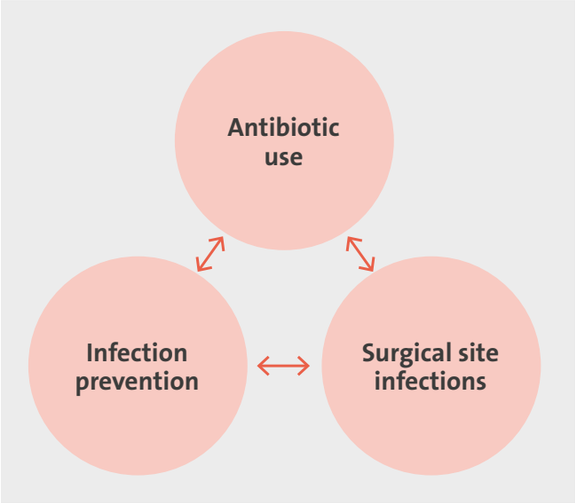
In addition to this, some simple things that are shown to be crucial for success with IPC are team engagement and education, as well as a dedicated focus on the basics, such as compliance to routines for hand hygiene, clothing and personal protective equipment such as gloves and aprons. Finally, throughout the IPC journey, clinics start looking at their own clinic with 'new eyes' and by removing unnecessary items from surfaces such as countertops and floors, cleaning and disinfection can be facilitated – leading to both better results and less effort needed from clinic members. We are very proud to have such motivated and committed IPC Ambassadors in our clinics who really want to give their patients the best possible care!"

Reducing surgical site infections

Surgical site infections (SSIs) pose a known risk after surgery, influenced by various factors. Minimising SSIs involves implementing high-quality IPC measures. Monitoring SSIs serves as an indicator of IPC effectiveness, and our programme emphasises routine surveillance following standard procedures, particularly in the neutering of healthy dogs and cats. We've set a target of less than 5% SSIs annually for this procedure, which has been achieved in countries where automated reporting is established, covering over 60% of our clinics.

While our success in meeting this target is encouraging, a challenge ahead is to maintain low SSIs while reducing antibiotic usage further. This requires concurrent implementation of robust infection prevention measures. In 2023, we made progress by reducing preventive antibiotic usage during neutering procedures in the UK by 15% while simultaneously decreasing the SSI rate, showcasing the effectiveness of our strategies.

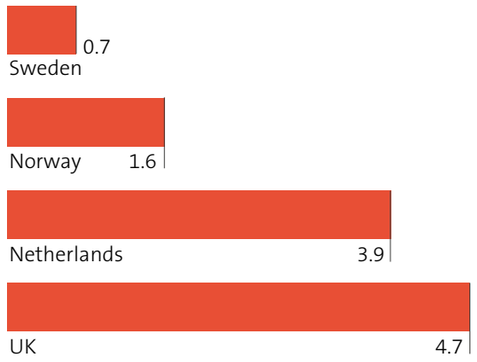
The value of our IPC Ambassador programme is reinforced by the observation that the greater the number of IPC Ambassadors in a country, the lower the SSI rate.



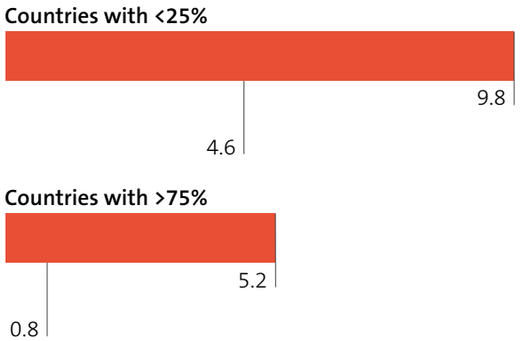
15%

reduction in preventive antibiotic use during neutering procedures in the UK, while simultaneously cutting the SSI rate

Surgical site infections (SSI) in neutered dogs and cats as a percentage of the total number of neuterings yearly (2023)



Surgical site infections (SSI) in neutered dogs and cats as a percentage of the total number of neuterings yearly (2023)



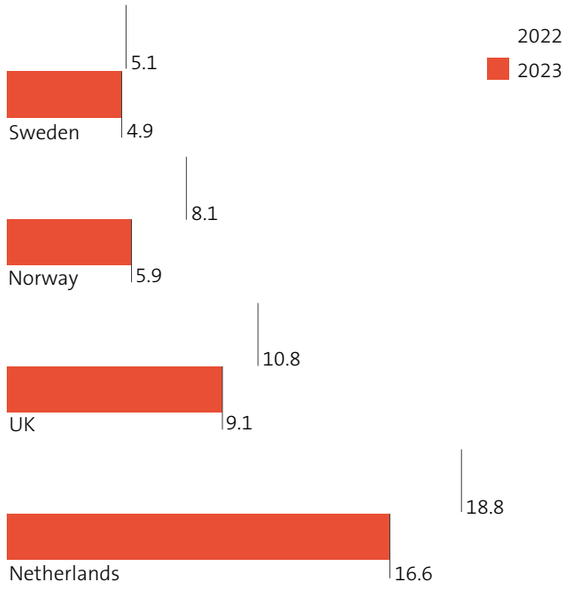
Average outpatient antibiotic use
Average SSI rate

Antibiotic stewardship

Antibiotic resistance continues to be one of the greatest threats to future public health. This informs the high priority we give to activity that limits any impact we could have on further development of antibiotic resistance. Our key goal is to minimise antibiotic use, limiting use to only when absolutely necessary. This work relies on some key principles, which are incorporated into our Antibiotic Stewardship Programme (ASP).

The first principle involves surveillance of antibiotic use, enabling international benchmarking and promoting more prudent antibiotic usage. We utilise digital innovation to collect automated antibiotic usage data in Sweden, Norway, the UK and the Netherlands. Additionally, we are in the process of initiating reporting in Germany, Spain and Finland in the coming months. This approach allows us to monitor and improve our antibiotic practices to combat antibiotic resistance effectively.

Local and systemic antibiotic treatments and prescriptions in outpatient care as a percentage of the total number of patient visits yearly (2022 and 2023)



As our knowledge grows, it has become evident that there is value in having not only a target for overall antibiotic use, but also benchmarks for specific focus areas. In 2023, we published data about prudent use of antibiotics in veterinary dental care, which will serve as a global benchmark and help the whole profession in finding the delicate balance of antibiotic and non-antibiotic treatments for dental diseases in our small animal clinics*.

> **In 2023, we published data about prudent use of antibiotics in veterinary dental care, which will serve as a global benchmark for the whole profession."**

The second principle focuses on education and information, where we share recent evidence on non-antibiotic options for conditions lacking strong antibiotic benefits. In 2023, we created e-learnings, webinars and informative materials to aid understanding. We also emphasise advising our clients on antibiotic stewardship. In the UK, we actively participated in the One Health Antibiotic Amnesty, promoting safe disposal of antibiotics in veterinary clinics and pharmacies. Positive feedback from pet owners encourages our continued support for the initiative and further educational efforts this year.

The team at Ark Vets, ready to support the One Health Antibiotic Amnesty.

The third key principle focuses on local leadership with the role of the ASP representative, who supports the IPC Ambassador focusing specifically on antibiotic stewardship in our clinics. Our ASP representatives all attend a two-day training course and are responsible for building the local culture, implementing various strategies and giving feedback to the local team. During the last year, local ASP representatives became mandatory in Sweden, resulting in over 85% coverage already.

Our farm vets play a vital role in the monitoring and education around the responsible use of antibiotics in food production to guard against antimicrobial resistance and thereby also protect human health. Our teams refer closely to the European Medicine Directive and Veterinary Medicines Directorate classifications for antibiotics: Category A (avoid), Category B (restrict), Category C (caution), Category D (prudence). For the most important Category B antibiotics, we have seen a year-on-year decrease in volume from 3% of total volume in 2020 to 1% in 2022. Across our farm network, we have seen a reduction in total antibiotic usage of 27% from 2020 to 2022.

LOOKING FORWARD

To further enable improvements in IPC and antibiotic use, one key priority for next year is to recruit more IPC Ambassadors and ASP representatives across the Group. During 2024, we also plan to expand our automated antibiotic usage reports to more countries in the Group to provide us with better tools for our Antibiotic Stewardship Programme.

27%

reduction in total antibiotic use across our farm network (from 2020 to 2022)

* Ljungquist et al, 2023: Antibiotic Use in Dental Care of Dogs, Cats and Rabbits in Sweden.

CASE STUDY

Inspiring reduction in overall antibiotic use at Sprinz and Nash Vets

The past year, the team at Sprinz and Nash Vets has decreased antibiotic use by an impressive 20% by gradually increasing the overall awareness of antibiotic resistance and prudent antibiotic use among the team members. Apart from using the new antibiotic guidelines in everyday practice, the team has implemented regular clinical governance meetings and case rounds where the team can join together to discuss when and why to use/not use antibiotics in different particular clinical presentations.

Amy D'Souza, ASP representative at Sprinz and Nash Vets explained, *"The discussions led to a more conscientious approach to prescribing antibiotics in these cases."*

The team has also started monitoring the overall antibiotic use at the clinic along with performing dedicated clinical audits for critically important antibiotics, as well as exploring non-antibiotic treatment alternatives, such as a Phovia Light Therapy kit to treat wounds and skin infections without antibiotics.

Amy concludes, *"By increasing the awareness of antibiotic resistance within the team, we are all more mindful of reaching for antibiotics and perhaps also more confident in having these conversations with clients."*

Innovative health solutions

Clinical research

The research of today is the evidence for the best patient care of tomorrow and 2023 has seen us take further strides to ensure we remain leaders in this area, developing our staff, and ensuring that data from our patients is contributing to improving the care of future patients.

"During 2023, we doubled the number of internal research grants provided through our Research Fund."

During 2023, we doubled the number of internal grants provided through our Research Fund, taking the total number of projects funded using this support from 40 to almost 80. These projects have been submitted by vets and nurses from referral, small animal and equine general clinics, covering clinical topics but also those relating to education and well-being. The number of research projects our teams are undertaking has also significantly grown from 120 a year ago to 259 today, from 141 researchers in 12 countries.

259

research projects being undertaken by 141 researchers in 12 countries

As part of one of our online programmes aimed at early-career vets hoping to embark on a specialist career pathway, we shared advice and guidance on writing research grants, designing studies, presenting data and critiquing the literature. This programme reached over 120 individuals both within and external to our business.

The appointment of Dr David Singleton as Group Head of Clinical Research in September 2023 continues our focus in this area. His expertise will allow us to build upon projects conducted at a local level into studies across multiple clinics and countries, not only improving the validity of the results, but also playing a vital role in helping build a worldwide community across the different veterinary sectors within the business.

Innovation and AI

The use of AI to enhance the interpretation of X-rays can form an important part of the diagnostic toolkit, supporting our teams, increasing their confidence and allowing for more timely interventions and improved patient care.

During 2023, we have continued our successful rollout of SignalPet, the innovative AI-driven platform that supports our teams with rapid analysis of X-ray images. This system harnesses large volumes of data, building valuable insights that can be used for ongoing research and refining diagnostic processes in veterinary medicine. SignalPet has been launched across the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Germany and Canada within the last 12 months, and has analysed over 15,000 radiographic studies.

As the database of radiographs the system learns from continues to grow, its capabilities will expand and further empower clinicians to efficiently and confidently construct comprehensive treatment plans, reinforcing our commitment to lead the way in innovative patient care.

LOOKING FORWARD

With the recent appointment of a Group Head of Clinical Research, we can build on the investment already made in research to maximise on the knowledge and skills we have across all clinics and countries, unify our approach and collaborate to make the great research we do better and to support our people in all roles.

CASE STUDY

AÚNA Veterinary Hospital in Spain leads advances in the field of neurosurgery

Our Neurology team from AÚNA Especialidades Veterinarias in Spain, led by Alejandro Luján, presented four studies at the 2023 ESVN (European Society of Veterinary Neurology) – ECVN (European College of Veterinary Neurology) Symposium in Venice; three of which were made possible thanks to the IVC Evidensia Group Veterinary Medical Board (GVMB) Research Fund. The industry-leading event was attended by over 500 specialists who heard keynote speeches from both veterinary and human neurosurgeons to provide a comparative view of the most up-to-date research. The studies presented by the Hospital AÚNA team represented significant advances in the field of veterinary neurosurgery and opened new perspectives in the diagnosis and treatment of neurological conditions in animals.

IVC Evidensia sustainability KPIs and targets

The data reported below covers IVC Evidensia's financial year to 30 September 2023 and all of our owned operations, unless otherwise stated.

KPI	Metric	Scope of data	Target	Our performance	
People				**2023**	**2022**
Gender diversity	Percentage of women in senior roles*	Group	By 2025, to have 50% of senior roles filled by women	50%	45%
Ethnic diversity	Number of vet and nurse scholarships funded for students from ethnically diverse backgrounds	UK	By 2025, to have funded 50 vet scholars and 15 nurse scholars from ethnically diverse backgrounds	37 vet and 10 nurse students currently receiving scholarships	25 vet and 7 nurse students selected for scholarships
Well-being	Number of countries with well-being programmes in place	Group	By 2023, to have established well-being programmes in all our markets	20 markets	10 markets
Clinical and professional development	Number of days of online and face-to-face learning as part of internal L&D programmes	Sweden, Finland, Netherlands, France, UK, Ireland, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Canada		23,813	9,168
Employee engagement	Percentage of employees taking part in annual Global Employee Survey	Group		75%	55%
Community investment	Number of IVC Evidensia Local Community Grants awarded	Group		219	107
Supply chain standards	Percentage of Group suppliers (by spend) signed up to IVC Evidensia Supplier Code of Conduct (or provided their own equivalent)	Group	By 2025, suppliers representing at least 95% of centrally contracted spend to have signed the IVC Evidensia Supplier Code of Conduct or provided their own	89%	80%
Safety	Accident incidence rate per 1,000 employees	Group		122	85
Planet					
GHG emissions**	Group Scope 1 carbon emissions	Group	By 2030, reduce absolute Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 50% and Scope 3 emissions by 30% By 2050, reduce Group emissions to net zero***	43,942	41,267
	Group Scope 2 carbon emissions	Group		6,819	11,323
	Group Scope 3 carbon emissions	Group		392,922	334,171
	Percentage of renewable electricity purchased	Group	85% by 2023	85%	65%
Waste	Percentage of waste diverted from landfill****	UK		100%	99%
	Percentage of non-hazardous waste recycled****	UK	By 2025, in the UK, recycling at least 50% of non-hazardous waste	34%	33%
Patients					
Access and affordability	Number of patients treated using the IVC Evidensia Care Fund	Group	To treat 3,500 patients per year, using the IVC Evidensia Care Fund by 2025 (revised target)	5,021	2,793
Complications and outcomes	Total number of surgical site infections of dogs and cats neutered	UK, Sweden, Netherlands	To reduce the total number of surgical site infections, as a percentage of dogs and cats neutered to 5% by 2025	4.2%	3.4%
Experience of the animal	Percentage of sites with species-specific waiting room facilities	Group	To ensure that 75% of our clinics have species-specific waiting room facilities by 2030 (revised target)	53%	52%
Antibiotic use	Number of antibiotic treatments and prescriptions as a percentage of total outpatient consultations	UK, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway	To reduce the total number of antibiotic prescriptions as a percentage of total outpatient consultations to 5% by 2030	9.5%	9.9%
Infection prevention and control (IPC)	Percentage of sites with an IPC Ambassador	Group	To appoint a dedicated IPC Ambassador to 75% of our clinics by 2025	24%	17%

* Senior roles defined as Board, Executive Committee and direct reports, Group Veterinary Medical Board (GVMB), Country Managers and direct reports, and Clinical Directors..
** 2022 GHG emissions data re-stated to reflect improved accuracy of data and change in Scope 3 calculation method.
*** Scope 1 and 2 targets are aligned with a 1.5°C science-based rate of decarbonisation, validated by SBTi. Targets measured from a 2022 base year.
**** Veterinary sites and offices only, where waste is managed directly by IVC Evidensia.

Everyone has a role in helping us build **The Positive Pawprint** at IVC Evidensia.

We welcome your comments and feedback on this Sustainability Report.
Please email positivepawprint@ivcevidensia.com

IVC EVIDENSIA POSITIVE PAWPRINT

IVC EVIDENSIA