

TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE TO CLIENTS & SUPPLIERS

- **Show what your team is doing for climate health**
- **Initiate climate health conversations with your community**
- **Collaborate with clients to work together on sustainability**

Why do we need to talk about our efforts?

When you talk about your achievements with your clients and suppliers, you will find there is a lot of support for your sustainability efforts. They will congratulate you on your progress!

This is so rewarding for your team. Plus, it gives you the opportunity to encourage others to support you by finding their own ways to be more sustainable.

Pet owners and vet staff are all working as a team to provide a better health outcome for their pets.

The more the mightier...

Improving climate health requires action by the whole of the community. Bringing your clients and suppliers with you will amplify your impact. The action of one isolated vet business will make relatively little improvement in climate health, but if you encourage others to join you and other vet businesses do the same, we can make a huge difference.

Some people feel awkward talking about climate, so we need to make climate health a normal part of an animal health discussion.



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We provide solutions for animal health

Clients come to you because they are concerned or anxious about their animals' health. It is comforting that you provide a plan, and they can work with you to solve the problem.

There is a lot of concern in the community about the health of the climate and the effect this is having on all animals. You need to show them we have a plan, and they can join us to provide solutions.

Getting your clients to understand and support your sustainability efforts is an important part of the whole sustainability process.

Remember success takes time and repetition

Just as you find when you make other changes in your clinic remember these key points:

- Clear simple messaging.
- Repetition to make it normal.
- It takes time, so don't get frustrated if it's not working straight away – keep trying.
- Science-based evidence appeals to many pet owners too.
- Include the non-climate related benefits as well (e.g. cost reductions that can be passed on to clients and staff wellbeing).

How can we initiate a conversation?

The key simple message is that **animal health requires climate health**.

You can come up with your own variations but keep it simple and repeat, repeat, repeat. Brainstorm with your team to come up with an easy mantra. Here are some examples:

- **Petcare needs climate care**
- **Care for the environment means care for our pets**
- **Keep our planet safe to keep animals safe**
- **Healthy pets need a healthy climate**
- **Healthy animals need a healthy climate**



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What do we need to do?

1. In clinic messaging (see also the “Sharing your Climate Care journey” poster):

In-clinic messaging can be used to raise awareness about our sustainability efforts and can be used to talk about our team’s achievements:

- Posters on the wall e.g. VfCA poster
- Social media posts
- Update your website
- Messaging on your invoices
- Messaging on your waiting room TV
- Notice in your practice newsletter
- Add a sentence to your email signature
- Update your message on hold



If a client or supplier makes a comment in response to one of the above, it’s a chance for us to extend the conversation by explaining some of the achievements our team has made so far. For example:

“Yes, we’ve been working on reducing our impact, because **healthy animals need a healthy climate**. There’s even some ways for you to get involved through the clinic. Did you know...?”

“Our solar panels are saving us lots of money, have zero emissions and of course, contribute to **climate and animal health**. Do you have solar panels at your house?”

“We’ve changed to a carbon neutral electricity provider which makes an immediate huge reduction in our carbon footprint. It’s also easy to do at home and helps us reach net zero.”

“We have stopped using all gas. It’s actually much cheaper to use electricity from our solar panels and reduces our emissions which is part of our efforts to improve **climate health for better animal health**.”

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2. Weather-related health issues

It is important to note the difference between weather and climate.

Weather is the day-to-day experience and **climate** is the long-term experience of weather.

Climate change affects animals in many ways.

Extreme heat:

- It may become too hot to take your dog for a walk. This may lead to heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- Hot pavements can blister paw pads.
- Brachycephalic dogs and obese dogs particularly can suffer heat stress and die.
- Patients with heart and kidney disease are also more vulnerable.
- Leaving pets at home with your air-conditioner on increases expense.
- Solar dermatitis and skin cancer is especially prevalent on white dogs and cats.

Extreme weather:

- Bushfires are devastating for wildlife and farm animals.
- Do you have a plan for your pets if your house is flooded?
- Can influence the spread of insect transmitted diseases especially by ticks and mosquitoes.

Some sample conversations are below. With the team, come up with other examples and role-play conversations with imaginary clients!



“Your dog has a heart condition, so you need to manage them carefully during hot weather. Extreme heat like we’ve been seeing recently is one of the reasons why we are doing our bit to reduce our emissions and make a **healthier climate for healthier animals including our pets.**”

“Of course, our clinic efforts alone will have limited impact on the climate, but if we encourage everyone to join us then we can make a **healthier climate for healthier pets!**”

“Your cat has renal failure and needs lots of water, so it is important to watch them in the hot weather. Another reason why we are encouraging everyone to help with dealing with **climate health as part of your animal’s health.**”

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3. Active in-clinic promotions

You can create your own in-clinic promotions that help to trigger a discussion about climate change. Here are some examples:

- **Christmas Raffle** - this year we feature ONLY carbon neutral products!
“Enter into our free raffle. All the prizes this year are carbon neutral, so you can help our efforts to do something to improve climate health for better pet health.”
- **Design a program** to incorporate one of your sustainability initiatives. At a team meeting, have pairs of team members pick one initiative out of a hat, for example: ‘Soft Plastic Recycling for Pet Food Bags’. They should then develop a process to inform and include clients in the initiative. Tip: Research, Write, Train, Promote, Implement, Measure then Reward!

4. Company Representatives

Pharmaceutical and Pet Food companies:

- Ask any rep visiting your clinic to give you an update on their company’s climate credentials. If they don’t have much to offer or don’t know about it, suggest they contact their manager or head office to find out if more can be done.
- If you are having a ‘lunch and learn’ promotion, ask them to include a brief outline of their sustainability/climate achievements as part of their presentation.

Laboratories and Delivery Drivers:

- Ask them their thoughts on electric vehicles (“EVs”) and engage in a conversation about how their company might change.

Drug and Product Wholesalers:

- Which carbon neutral products do they have on offer? Chat about the future and how some practices will prefer to choose environmentally friendly products. Suggest they create an index of all manufacturer’s sustainability statements for distribution to every vet practice.

Veterinary Tools and Equipment Representatives:

- Have a conversation about the lifespan of various tools, equipment, and machinery. What is a company doing to reduce landfill? Do they have a sustainability statement? Is it possible to improve the type and amount of packaging used to transport their goods?

REMEMBER!

The long-term aim is to make ‘climate health’ a normal part of your business and lifestyle conversations.

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