



ACCREDITATION REPORT

George Veterinary Group

December 2024





Executive Summary

George Veterinary Group, hereafter referred to as GVG, is an independent mixed animal practice that provides veterinary care out of four sites across Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. It has been a member of iEE since 2020 and, this year, has achieved Green level accreditation having demonstrated ongoing commitment to continuous improvement of its environmental performance.

As a multisite mixed practice, with a number of ambulatory staff, transport, resource monitoring and staff buy-in have been key challenges throughout GVG's sustainability journey.

A long-term fleet decarbonisation strategy is key for the practice to achieve real impact on business travel associated emissions – the key contributor to the carbon footprint. Alongside continued efforts to improve current fleet efficiency, the practice has now committed to the addition of an EV to the fleet. This should be recognised as representing an important first step towards fleet decarbonisation, however, must be accompanied by ongoing monitoring of driver efficiency and used as a platform to work towards wider decarbonisation.

The senior leadership team's (SLT) support for the practice's sustainability goals has grown and can be seen by improvements in the allocation of resource to supporting data monitoring and implementing action. This should be ongoing, in order to recognise the practice's stated commitments to maximising environmental performance. The engagement of the wider staff body with sustainability should also continue to be supported as, in order to maintain Green level, all staff members should act in accordance with GVG's environmental ethos.

Now, GVG should use the strong foundations in place to develop a long-term plan for organisational decarbonisation, including interim goals. It should continue to work with wider stakeholders, including the influential work done with the farming community – a key highlight for the practice. Whilst time for high resolution resource monitoring, engagement and transport still present challenges, GVG should continue to assess how these can be overcome and maximise its impact in areas such as waste management, biodiversity work and wider influence, where it performs highly.

Highlights

- Sustainability is incorporated into both inductions and six-monthly appraisals as a named core value of the practice and the reflection on individual contribution to the practice's sustainability goals has been highlighted as a particularly impactful change this year.
- A strong understanding of resource management processes is evident, and impactful improvements continue to be made. Absolute reductions have been achieved year to year in electricity, gas, isoflurane, general waste, mixed recycling, paper and transport and a 9% reduction has been achieved in the overall carbon footprint.
- GVG's board has approved hours for another person to support the Green Champion with reviewing data, which will allow data to be reviewed monthly.
- Effective waste management is in place. Waste is well managed and monitored and good reductions have been achieved



Improvements

- Now that a clear understanding of the practice's environmental impact, and business context has been developed, GVG should work to develop a long-term sustainability strategy towards an 'end-goal'. Begin to develop a carbon reduction goal, and associated roadmap with interim targets
- Ensure sufficient dedicated time continues to be allocated to sustainability, in order to allow the fine tuning of GVG's environmental performance.
- Investigate whether the switch to a new electricity contractor, and subsequent planned smart-meter installation, will allow half-hourly data to be collected.
- Consider the intensity metrics currently used for data normalisation, and whether other metrics may provide better insight given context of usage.
- Consider calculating carbon footprints using datasets running January to December, in order to ensure these datasets are in line with emission factors.
- To maintain Green level accreditation, a site visit will be required next year.



Score

Investors in the Environment is pleased to confirm that, having recently completed the audit process, George Veterinary Group has achieved the Green level accreditation with a score of 77%.



To achieve Green level accreditation, an organisation is required to demonstrate continual improvement through the implementation of their Environmental Management System, working towards a minimum 2% efficiency improvement year-on-year. At Green level, the organisation is focusing on driving wider sustainability development throughout and is starting to consider their value chain with the implementation of sustainable procurement practices, and associated carbon emissions.



About the audit

The Investors in the Environment (iE) accreditation requires an organisation to provide evidence that it has met a range of pre-defined criteria, set targets to reduce its environmental impact and taken action to improve its performance whilst enhancing the community in which it operates. Evidence is presented at an annual audit and this report provides an evaluation of the organisation's performance as well as offers advice on the next steps for continued improvement.

The Investors in the Environment annual audit assesses five key areas of an organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS). These areas include:

- Environmental policy
- Resource management and monitoring
- Progress against targets
- Action planning including social/ environmental projects
- Communication

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate the organisation's EMS and make suggestions relating to its performance. Future opportunities and risks to the organisation's environmental practices may also be identified as a result.

The audit consisted of an examination of documentation evidence, and an interview with key personnel on 11/12/2024.

Evidence submitted included:

- Updated EMS Reporting Pack
- Travel Plan
- Various resource measurement sheets
- Environmental Action Plan
- Environmental Policy
- Communication examples

Summary Results Table

Audit category	Score
Section 1 - Leadership and Governance (Policy)	90%
Section 2 - Resource Use, Data, & Monitoring	79%
Section 3 - Performance, Action, & Targets	69%
Section 4 - Carbon Management	86%
Section 5 - Waste Management & Materials	88%
Section 6 – Transport & Travel Planning	89%
Section 7 - Environmental & Social Projects	100%
Section 8 – Communication & Engagement	100%
Overall Score	77%



Audit Scoring

Each section of the organisation’s Environmental Management System (EMS) is scored as detailed below. Full reference to scoring can be found separately in the organisation’s audit sheet upon request, including auditor comments against specific criteria.

Fail	<p>0 Points: A failing score means that this criterion has not been met nor is any progress demonstrated.</p> <p><i>No progress or commitment has been made in this area.</i></p>
Action Needed	<p>1 point: Action is needed to improve and should be considered in alignment with the auditor’s comments and an appropriate timeline. These will be discussed during quarterly support calls to help improve.</p> <p><i>The organisation is considering developing this area, but no formal process has been established or meaningful progress has not been made.</i></p>
Pass / Compliant	<p>2 points: The criteria have been met, though there may also be suggestions to improve.</p> <p><i>The organisation is beginning or improving this area, is broadly compliant with the iE criteria, and may be showing processes that support improvements.</i></p>
Outstanding	<p>3 points: This criterion has been exceeded as measured against the basic iE criteria and may demonstrate a significant improvement since the previous year or may highlight best practice.</p> <p><i>The organisation is succeeding with supportive target achievement and may be leading or supporting others in their sector or influence to achieve improvements.</i></p>

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Leadership & Governance (Environmental Policy)</h2>		90%
<p>The process of developing an environmental policy includes a review of the environmental aspects of an organisation and the impacts these have on the wider environment. This should consider material use and consumption, energy use, water management, waste minimisation, etc.</p> <p>The policy is the main driver for environmental performance improvements and needs to be led by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). It should be reviewed annually, alongside environmental performance updates.</p> <p>In time, wider strategies and long-term objectives should be considered by the organisation and used to inform the commitments outlined in the policy. The policy should be communicated to staff and made available for all to review, both internally and publicly.</p>		
<p>Strengths</p>		



- The SLT support for GVG's Green Group has strengthened, with five of the practice's directors now directly involved with the group. SLT has also made hours available dedicated to the practice's sustainability work – this evidences the recognition of the importance of sustainability in practice.
- The business context is clearly considered within the Environmental Policy, and it covers wider impacts of business practices, such as impacts from clients and suppliers. Good specific commitments are in place to achieve the reduction of such, and are supported by evidenced action.
- A sustainable procurement policy in place that focuses on ethical procurement and the impact of items.
- Sustainability is incorporated into both inductions and six-monthly appraisals as a named core value of the practice.

Actions for review

- Now that a clear understanding of the practice's environmental impact, and business context has been developed, GVG should work to develop a long-term sustainability strategy towards an 'end-goal'.
- Continue to embed sustainability as an integral part of all roles. At appraisals, as well as asking what staff have done to embody sustainability as a core value, to further embed sustainability within the wider team, consider introducing specific sustainability-based targets. This could be a goal staff select themselves, and could relate directly to their role, such as aiding with good waste segregation, or be an extra action, such as getting involved in, or leading, a project.
- To maintain Green level accreditation, a site visit will be required next year.

Resource Use & Data Monitoring



79%

Resource use and data monitoring is pivotal for any organisation to ensure good management of performance. Within this section of the EMS, an organisation is required to develop robust data recording procedures and set a process for data revision that aligns with general performance reviews – which could be monthly, quarterly, or even half yearly, depending on the measured resource and planned activity.

To support the monitoring of data, a review of operations and processes across the organisation needs to be carried out to understand how and why resources are used and where opportunities for improvement exist.

As part of resource management, prioritisation is key, to ensure activities and resources focused on efficiency gains are deployed in areas which can have the biggest impact.

Strengths

- Good and concise but comprehensive resource reviews are in place and a strong understanding of resource management processes is evident. Improvements continue to be made in efficiency, including a boiler upgrade, installation of thermostatic controls, motions sensors, and continued low-flow training.
- Power consumption of individual appliances has been measured and used to improve switch off procedures.



- Baseline datasets have been updated to 2021, allowing more reliable performance analysis. Strong monthly datasets continue to be collected and, where possible, utility data is collected from meter reads.
- Data is reviewed half-yearly, and outcomes are used to inform action. GVG's board has approved hours for another person to support the Green Champion with reviewing data, which will allow data to be reviewed monthly.

Actions for review

- Consider developing an Asset List of electrical equipment that outlines efficiencies and includes switch off procedures to further support resource reviews and identify opportunities to improve processes.
- Investigate whether the switch to a new electricity contractor, and subsequent planned smart-meter installation, will allow half-hourly data to be collected. If so, this can be used to develop heat maps of electricity consumption, and so identify anomalous spikes in usage over a 24 hour or weekly cycle.
- GVG receives a free space on the [iiE Green Champion Course](#) included within annual membership. This may be useful for the new sustainability team member to complete to support them in their role.

Performance, Action & Targets



69%

Setting targets provides an opportunity to measure performance against planned activities. Where performance is falling short of achieving targets, future or underway activity or project plans can be refined to ensure set out goals are achieved.

Targets can be set against activity metrics to analyse how annual changes to business activity have affected performance, with the aim to always improve efficiency where absolute reductions are not achievable.

Clear, relevant and well managed action plans should record intended activities and support the review of performance, with the aim to achieving the set targets.

Strengths

- Data has been normalised to allow insight into efficiency of resource use per FTE or per procedure (isoflurane) and performance is assessed against both absolute targets, and normalised targets.
- Absolute reductions have been achieved year on year in electricity, gas, isoflurane, general waste, mixed recycling, paper and transport. Targets for the upcoming year have been set at 2%, with good understanding of action needed to achieve these reductions evidenced.
- GVG is using the Yale Gassing Greener Tool to help staff better understand the impact of anaesthesia choices on a case-by-case basis.
- A comprehensive Action Plan is in place that outlines sufficient action. This is well organised, accessible for all the Green Group and evidences action progress. Some planned action is particularly impactful, including changing power supplier, improving insulation and installation of double glazing.

Actions for review

- Consider the intensity metrics currently used for data normalisation, and whether other metrics may provide better insight given context of usage. For example, heating degree day data may be a useful metric for understanding gas usage: for further guidance on using this data, contact your iiE Support Officer.
- Consider how rainwater and grey water can be used, e.g. collected rainwater could be used to wash vans.
- As outlined within the Action Plan, remove individual control of heating systems to allow appropriate and efficient temperature control.
- Consider developing longer term reduction targets for key resources.

Carbon Management



86%

With increased focus on working towards Net Zero and the importance of Climate Action, carbon management is a key element of the iiE accreditation process. Organisations are required to calculate their footprint starting at buildings level (energy consumed within the buildings), then water, travel, and finally including additional aspects of business activity, such as waste, etc.

Carbon Management provides an opportunity for an organisation to consider which resources or operations need to be prioritised to decarbonise as quickly as possible, in line with Climate Science. The output from a carbon footprint calculation should be used to inform these decisions, which is another reason data capture and accurate data reporting is necessary.

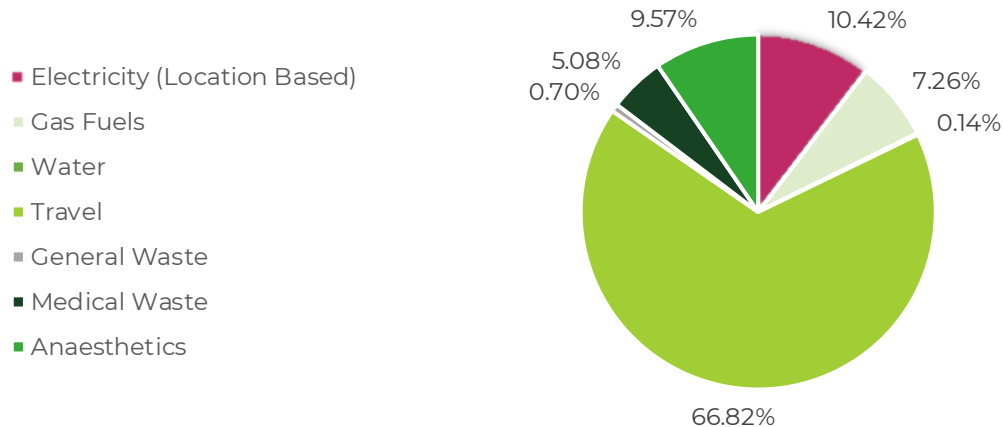
In accordance with the [GHG Protocol](#), iiE encourages the dual reporting of an organisation's carbon footprint, which results in the provision of two outputs for those organisations on a renewable energy tariff, a 'location-based' and a 'market-based' carbon footprint.

The 'location-based' method reflects the impact of electricity drawn from the grid, using the UK grid's average emission factor, regardless of the tariff to which an organisation has signed up.

The 'market-based' method uses an emission factor which is either specific to the electricity tariff to which the reporting organisation has signed up or a generic 'UK renewable energy' factor, which allows electricity from renewables or low carbon sources to be reported with lower emissions than those generated through the burning of fossil fuels. An energy provider should be able to provide the emission factor for any of its tariffs.

Electricity purchased and distributed through the National Grid, with energy generated from a variety of sources, will always have a carbon footprint as a result. Location based reporting demonstrates the organisation's awareness of the overall impact Grid sourced electricity contributes towards climate change. Direct carbon reduction can only be achieved through the installation of solar or other renewable technologies. However, the market-based reporting provides an opportunity to demonstrate an organisation's commitment to support the reduction of emissions through its purchasing decisions.

Total tCO₂e 2024 286.88



GVG calculates its carbon footprint in line with its financial year, and resource data collection. As such, each carbon footprint covers the period of July to June: the most recent carbon footprint runs July 2023 to June 2024.

The carbon footprint calculations for 2022/23 and 2023/24 include data for electricity, gas, water, general waste, mixed recycling, business mileage (fleet and grey fleet) and anaesthetics (isoflurane). Note, GVG is waiting for reporting data on refrigerant gas associated with air conditioning units for 2023/24 and will capture this within the footprint when data is obtained.

Strengths

- GVG has seen a 9% reduction in the carbon footprint from 2022/23 to 2023/24. Compared to the baseline year's carbon footprint (2021/22: 307 tCO₂e), the practice has achieved a 7% reduction.
- Reductions of 3%, 32% and 12% have been achieved respectively in Scope 1, Scope 2 and Scope 3 of the carbon footprint year on year. These are primarily attributed to the reductions achieved in electricity and transport.

Actions for review

- Emission factors are unique to the year they are associated with. Consider calculating carbon footprints using datasets running January to December, in order to ensure these datasets are in line with emission factors.
- To build on Green Level, look to incorporate further scope analysis of the carbon footprint. Consider the contribution of each scope to the carbon footprint total, and how actions can be focused to tackle areas with a higher contribution.
- Begin to develop a long-term carbon reduction goal, and associated roadmap with interim targets, for GVG. This may involve signing up to specific targets such as Net Zero. Consider providing appropriate training to support those involved with carbon reduction plans, such as the [IEMA Pathways to Net Zero Course](#).
- If the practice is considering exploring carbon offsets, this iE webinar provides useful information on [the role of carbon offsetting, capture and removal](#).

Waste Management & Materials



88%

Organisations are required to review and improve upon waste management. This should start with how waste is managed on site and ultimately disposed of to ensure the correct processes are followed.

From Silver level onwards, thought should be given to procurement and how waste is generated on site, from the materials purchased that end up in the waste stream, through to the activities on site that create waste.

Finally, circular economy concepts and thinking should be introduced, with the waste hierarchy leading to decision making, opting for elimination as the priority, followed by choosing products that can be reused or repaired.

Strengths

- Good waste management processes are in place, and bin infrastructure is clear and labelled. Training on segregation of clinical waste has been delivered and the balance of offensive versus other clinical waste streams is monitored.
- Impressive reductions have been achieved in paper usage, general waste and mixed recycling year on year, and the Green Champion reports that this is due to identifying unnecessary paper usage, improved team compliance with waste segregation and identification of opportunities to reduce waste inputs, such as identifying and stopping magazine orders.
- Multiple streams of recycling are in place: soft plastics, blister packs, batteries, printer consumables and e-waste, and food waste is separated.
- Regular bin checks are in place, with outcomes feedback to relevant staff as reminders. An annual bin audit, across GVG, is used to assess compliance, bin access and signage with outcomes informing bin infrastructure, communications and procurement.
- GVG has informed suppliers of its sustainability goals and asked for support in minimising packaging. Most products are sourced from a single wholesaler: GVG has had conversations with this supplier about the sustainability of its products and how it assesses this. Packaging is re-used for GVG's own deliveries, and the supplier utilises re-usable crates and takes back soft plastics for recycling.

Actions for review

- Consider distributing a supplier questionnaire to assess their approaches to sustainability, e.g. whether they have an Environmental Policy and carbon reduction plan in place.
- Continue to identify opportunities to move away from single use to re-useable items.

Transport & Travel Planning



89%

A travel plan must consider the travel needs for an organisation, including access, availability of public services, and safety of travel where relevant. Travel is the single largest contributor to UK Greenhouse Gas Emissions, and can be a challenging area to manage, given the need for transport within any operation.

The plan should aim to remove barriers for individuals to choose active/shared transport over single car occupancy, and then to consider electrification of vehicles over internal combustion engines.

Surveys are a useful tool to engage with individuals around travel habits and to support identification and implementation of barrier removals, to improve good travel habits.

Strengths

- An updated Travel Plan and vehicle procurement policy is in place. The former outlines GVG's travel needs, commuting routes and public transport information, barriers to sustainable travel, cycle routes and storage, current initiatives to support sustainable travel, and travel survey results. The latter specifies that all vehicles must be fuel efficient, second-hand, and that GVG will aim to move to EVs when range allows.
- An EV is due to be added to the fleet in the upcoming year, taking over half of the delivery mileage. This represents a significant step for the practice towards fleet decarbonisation and can be used as a pilot for other farm vehicles.
- GVG continues to identify and reduce unnecessary mileage, for example small animal vets are now only required to attend morning rounds if they have an inpatient.
- Cycle racks have been installed and GVG has signed up to the Cycle to Work Scheme.
- Whilst efficiency data isn't directly accessible from telematic data, repair bills are monitored and used to identify 'frequent flyers' which may indicate inefficient driving. This will be used to identify individuals in need of driving efficiency training and closer monitoring.

Actions for review

- The Green Group has trialled a leaderboard for encouraging better fuel efficiency, however found that only staff who were already on board with sustainability engaged with it and fuel data has been difficult to obtain. If fuel data can be obtained from fuel cards, consider incentivising driving efficiency further, e.g. by providing minimum efficiency targets and setting KPIs for staff who drive regularly relating to these.
- Consider running a Q&A session with a staff member who drives the new EV to cover any frequent questions/concerns staff may have around switching vehicle type.
- Monitor uptake of the Cycle to Work Scheme and use future travel surveys to assess barriers to uptake.
- Continue to minimise mileage and work towards fleet decarbonisation, as this will have significant impact on GVG's carbon footprint.

Environmental & Social Projects



100%

All organisations need to consider their corporate responsibility, both for social, community and wellbeing impacts, and for environmental impacts through biodiversity or conservation efforts.

This section requires organisations to undertake a range of projects that not only aim to achieve impacts, but to also encourage individual participation and engagement – to raise conversation and encourage individuals to consider what they can do outside of the organisation as well.

It is strongly encouraged that organisations undertake projects in all three areas, Resource Efficiency, Biodiversity / Conservation, and Social / Community.

Strengths

- GVG has undertaken numerous projects this year, exceeding the number required to pass at Green Level, earning a score of Outstanding in this subsection of the audit.
- Projects were completed in all three project categories and included a Switch Off competition, engaging farmers with sustainable farming techniques and farmer mental health fundraisers.

Actions for review

- As projects have a notable focus on biodiversity, consider incorporating citizen science projects into these, such as the [Big Garden Birdwatch](#), or the [Big Butterfly Count](#)

Communication & Engagement



100%

The scheme requires that active and engaged communication happens at all levels, as sustainability cannot only happen within the Senior Team or only happen at ground level but requires a collaborative approach. Regular and consistent communication and engagement is therefore pivotal to ensuring objectives are achieved.

In addition, regular reporting is necessary to highlight the success of activities and improvements achieved. These should be produced both for the SLT, but also for wider staff to celebrate success and recognise efforts they have made through participation.

In time, reports should be made available publicly alongside the environmental policy to further demonstrate the commitment and celebrate the achievements of the organisation.

Strengths



- GVG has maintained strong lines of communication with SLT and has used sustainability insights to develop an annual report that is shared internally.
- The Green Group has continued to communicate with wider staff via regular updates, engaging newsletters, reminders and campaigns. Gamification principles have also been utilised to foster further engagement and communication strategies are assessed for effectiveness. Reflection on individual contribution to the practice's sustainability goals has been highlighted as a particularly impactful change this year.
- Communication with, and engagement of, external stakeholders remains a key strength for GVG. Social media, projects, direct communications and the website are used to engage suppliers, clients and the wider farming community with sustainability. Suggestion boxes and posters are also being placed in waiting rooms to increase the visibility of sustainability within the practice.

Actions for review

- To maintain Green level continue to utilise strategies such as incorporating sustainability into appraisals for all staff to ensure that engagement with sustainability goals is practice wide.

Next steps

- Develop a long-term sustainability strategy with a clear end goal and roadmap.
- Introduce measurable role-specific sustainability targets into staff appraisals to embed sustainability practices across the organization.
- Create a detailed asset list of electrical equipment, including energy efficiencies and switch-off procedures, to improve resource management processes.
- If available, utilise smart-meter data to analyse half-hourly energy consumption, create heat maps, identify anomalies, and refine energy management strategies.
- Set long-term resource reduction goals with interim milestones to ensure sustained and measurable improvements in efficiency and sustainability.
- Consider calculating carbon footprints using datasets running January to December, in order to ensure these datasets are in line with emission factors.
- Expand data normalisation metrics to include factors like heating degree days for better contextualisation and understanding of resource consumption patterns.
- Develop a carbon reduction roadmap with interim targets, supported by relevant training and stakeholder engagement.



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