

Veterinary, Biodiversity and IPBES

Key points:

Veterinary communities worldwide (which include vets, paravets, and others) are trusted to care for non-human animals and are well placed to champion biodiversity.

The seven IPBES drivers of biodiversity loss are a valuable tool for encouraging, structuring and mapping action in community workshops.

(The 5+2 drivers are: land use change, direct exploitation of species, climate change, all the pollutants, invasive alien species; and human detachment from, and undervaluing of, nature.)

All these drivers are relevant to users and practitioners of veterinary services.

What Vetwork UK is doing:

In 2022 Vetwork UK developed a workshop to use within the UK veterinary community, encouraging commitment to action on both biodiversity loss and climate change. It has an explicitly international perspective and supports other emerging vet sustainability initiatives.

The workshop is structured on a five-part Carbon Literacy model: Participants learn/revise relevant basic science; examine human culpability; explore carbon foot-printing and biodiversity mapping; engage with global climate and biodiversity justice; and commit to specific actions both in their daily work, and at the wider level of professional practice.

The workshop involves a total of 8hrs of self- and face-to-face group-study. It piloted successfully in December at British Veterinary Association, London. International colleagues from Papua New Guinea, Afghanistan, Nepal, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Mexico fed in their experience (using a simple questionnaire).

Professor Dave Goulson, an invertebrate biologist at the University of Sussex, presented on the environmental effects of veterinary parasiticides on invertebrates.

17 participants, covering veterinary leadership across a spectrum of disciplines together with pharmacy and social science, each committed to two actions. 14 also applied successfully for a Certificate of Carbon Literacy from the UK Carbon Literacy Project. Participant progress against commitments will be followed up in December 2023.

Vetwork UK is developing the workshop for new audiences, with greater emphasis on biodiversity, and has also used the IPBES drivers structure in our engagement with UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism 2026.