

COVID-19 and support for the veterinary professions

10 tips for mental wellbeing:



1. Reduce worry and anxiety where you can

Minimise your exposure to news that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information updates only once or twice, at specific times during the day, from a trusted source. Resist constant updates which can increase anxiety and distress.

2. Maintain social contact

Being socially connected to people is key for mental health. Try to maintain and structure in regular contact to people dear to you by phone, video call, social media, and other ways that are possible within the restrictions you face.

3. Keep to a routine structure

Over recent weeks many veterinary practices and working environments have rapidly changed their working practices and many of us are now spending more time working alone. Keep to normal timings, maintain a routine even if it is an adapted one, and keep in safe contact with people.

4. Financial challenges: we are in it together

This is a financially challenging time for the vet community. Client visits may have reduced greatly, and many practice owners have worries about how they will keep running their practice and their staff. Also many self-employed vets are facing financial difficulty. It's important to talk about concerns and worries like this and not keep them to yourself. You are not alone, we are all in this together!

5. Live healthy & focus on what you can control

Try to move or keep on doing some exercise daily. Exercise releases chemicals important for your mental health. Eat healthily. Identify aspects of your life and work which you can control – even if small – focus time each day on these.

6. Take extra care of your staff

Emphasise a sense of safety and solidarity in your team. Support staff safety through the right resources, equipment and protections. Keep staff updated with regular bulletins but await decisions which you can communicate with clarity. Plan regular small debriefs for staff working remotely. Keep in regular contact, promote peer support and a culture of it being OK to say that you are not OK.

7. Make allowance for circumstances

Although our industry is facing this together, individuals also face their own challenges in their unique situations with health vulnerabilities, financial insecurity, isolation, and previous experiences of adversity. Look out for colleagues, offer support and if you are struggling, do not hesitate to call out and ask for help. You are not alone.

8. Self-care: rest and sleep enough

Rest, sleep, nutrition and hydration are more important than ever. To care for others we also need to care for ourselves. Adapting to change and feelings of vulnerability place significant demands on us. Prioritise sleep and rest where you can.

9. Focus on contribution and meaning

As vet professionals, we want to help and some of us may experience frustration at being unable to be on the clinical frontline in a human health emergency. Maintaining day to day meaning in our roles may feel challenging at this time, but it is vital. Helping to maintain food production and supporting the lives of people who rely on their animals is vital at times of trouble. Animals bring people joy, comfort and reasons to keep going in difficulty, and we all have a role and can help.

10. Reminder: together come out of it stronger

In the vet world, we have faced many disease outbreaks before, with all the challenges and difficulties attached. However, we also learned from previous outbreaks that we are a strong and resilient profession who adapt in times of difficulty, and that we are strongest when we are working together and supporting each other.

If you're struggling or need to talk, Vetlife is here for you

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