

# The ultimate laundry guide for vets.

While laundry may not be the first priority of a busy veterinary practice, it's an incredibly important cog in the wheel that shouldn't be overlooked. Not only is it crucial for effective infection prevention and control, but also for reputation management. In this interactive guide, we take you through all the need-to-know information about effective laundry in a veterinary practice and offer useful guidance and tips throughout. You can browse each section individually to suit your practice needs.



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# Reputation management

You know more than anyone just how important your practice's reputation is. Not only can a good reputation encourage more business but also boost team morale.

In today's 'always-on' digital culture, online review sites and social media make it very easy for customers to quickly and publicly share their opinion and experiences of your business. From the moment customers enter your practice, they will be making judgements on the welcome they receive at the reception desk, the outcome of the care their pet has received, and everything in between.

**So how can you ensure that the reviews you receive are positive? To help vets understand what matters most to their customers, we conducted research of over 1000 pet owners. Then, we surveyed 100 vets to get their insights too. Here's what we learnt:**

## The importance of online reviews

Over three quarters of vets believe that their practice's reputation is key to the success of their business, yet 72% said they're worried about the impact that a public complaint could have on their reputation.

And, our research showed that the majority of vet customers would make it known online if they received a bad service;

**63%** admit that if they had a problem with a practice they would air their grievances on an online review site.

## The five C's of the customer experience:

**89%** would be quick to tell others if they were dissatisfied with any aspect of the practice or care received.

**60%** said they would share their views on social media.



## Five steps to successful reputation management

It's important to remember that you can't please all of your customers all of the time, and the odd negative review has become a fact of life for businesses in all sectors. However, to do everything possible to ensure that your customers have good experiences of your practice, understanding what matters most to them is crucial.

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## Here's what matters most to vet customers:



### Care outcomes

96%

Taking a poorly cat or dog to visit the vet can be a stressful and worrying time for the pet owner. It's therefore no surprise that the standard of care the pet receives and the outcome of that care is what tops the list. Even if the visit is for a routine inoculation or check-up, pet owners will be keen to ensure their pet receives the best possible care.



### Cleanliness & hygiene

94%

Cleanliness and hygiene came in as second priority for pet owners and it's easy to see why. As you'll know, infection management is an important part of the job, as the potential for germs to spread between animal and bedding is significant.



### Customer service

83%

Our research also showed that your customers have high expectations when it comes to customer service. Excellent service extends to every part of their experience: how you interact with them and their pets; parking and other facilities; and how you handle complaints – the list could go on and on. And with consumers now going online to report on their experience, any aspect of the experience, good or bad could be subjected to a customer review.



### Cost of treatment

81%

The cost of treatment for a sick animal can be significant in the eyes of the customer, and so this is bound to have an impact on their experience. What's key is that it's only one aspect of what shapes your reputation and it's important to consider it in the wider context of all these factors.



### Customer waiting times

70%

Long waits at busy times can also affect a customer's perception of your practice. Although unavoidable and with most customers accepting of delays, vets need to be mindful of how they respond to the situation if a disgruntled customer is kept waiting too long and that their feelings on their wait could be aired online.

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So, how can you ensure that the customer experience at your practice is as good as it can be at all times?

**Here are five practical steps you can take:**



## Set quality targets and standards

While many UK veterinary practices are already working towards accreditation under the RCVS' Voluntary Practice Standards Scheme, practices should also consider setting their own standards for quality. These can range from defining laundry processes, to how you'd like your customers to be greeted at reception.



## Staff training

When you're busy all day every day in the treatment room, it can be easy to overlook the non-medical training needs of your staff. However, customer service training or guidance on how to handle and respond to online reviews can be incredibly helpful in maintaining and managing your practice reputation.



## Hygiene

Cleanliness and hygiene came in at second place in our research into the top five things that matter most to customers. Customers expect to see staff in clean uniforms and for the bedding and towels their pets use to be clean and stain and infection-free. Therefore, dedicating appropriate attention and resource to this is vital to practice reputation. We'll cover this in more detail in the next section.



## Manage online reviews

It's impossible to fully ensure that you'll never get a negative online review from your customers, but what you can control is how you handle the situation. Irrespective of how you feel about any negative comments, it's important to respond calmly and reasonably. Explain how disappointed you are that they have had a bad experience at your practice and invite them to call in to discuss it face-to-face or over the phone. Try and take the debate offline as quickly as possible and be seen to handle it professionally.



## Get to know customers and their pets

Feedback from your customers can go a long way. Try to find out what your customers like and dislike about your practice and then consider how easy it is the act on their recommendations.

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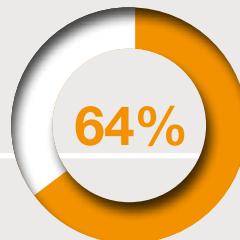
# Best practice infection control

**Coming into contact with pets' bodily fluids and potentially infectious substances is an inevitable part of day to day working life for vets, therefore the spread of infection through cross contamination poses a very real threat.**

For any busy working veterinary practice, it can be difficult to find the time to review existing infection control procedures. However, routinely following strict procedures on cleanliness and hygiene and ensuring these practices are carried out effectively between each patient is essential in the fight against infection.

Laundry is a crucial part of this. Nasty micro-organisms which could cause MRSA or other potentially harmful viruses can live and spread on scrubs, animal bedding, towels or staff uniforms. How these items are handled and washed should be carefully considered and form a key part of your infection control procedures. The type of machine you use and the temperature you wash items at is crucial when it comes to ensuring harmful infections are completely eradicated during the laundry process:

## Best practice infection control



Our research showed that **64%** of vets agreed that practice hygiene has become increasingly important and that clean staff uniforms and waiting rooms are among the first things that customers notice when they enter the practice.

## Best practice laundry for vets

**Did you know?**



**Health guidelines state that to kill bacteria, contaminated laundry should be washed at or above:**

**65°C** for at least **10 minutes** or **71°C** for at least **3 minutes** or **82°C** for at least **1 minute**

Can you guarantee that your washing machine can reach these temperatures and maintain them for this length of time?



**Domestic washing machines are ineffective at killing infectious diseases**

yet almost half of the vets we recently surveyed use one in their practices on a daily basis.

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## Best practice infection control

## Best practice laundry for vets

**We recommend the PAWS approach to laundry in veterinary care. A simple but effective four step approach:**

1



2



3



4



Using disposable gloves and aprons when handling contaminated linen will **help you to protect yourself and stop the spread of infection.**

Make sure soiled and clean laundry is **stored in different places** and infected bedding, towels or scrubs are **washed separately to prevent cross contamination.**

Using a commercial machine rather than a domestic one allows you to **wash at the high temperatures required to kill infections.**

After washing, dry laundered items in a tumble dryer to **ensure any remaining bacteria is killed.**

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# On-premise laundry vs outsourcing

**On-premise or outsourced - which laundry method is the right choice for your practice? Cost, space and demand are all vital factors that need to be taken into account.**

One of the challenges for vet practices who use an outsourced laundry service is the turnaround time. While some providers offer a next day service, many vets have to wait for a collection date, or for the dirty laundry to meet a minimum load weight before it can be collected. This can lead to the build-up of soiled laundry, which can become a greater infection risk, and also potentially means that items such as bedding, towels and uniforms are in short supply, which could have an impact on the overall, day to day running of the practice.

While there is a cost involved in purchasing your own laundry appliances, in comparison to what you'd usually pay over the same amount of time for an outsourced service, bringing laundry on-premise is often the cheaper option, not to mention that this allows you to wash as and when you need to. Some commercial models have load programmes that will recognise the weight of the load and dispense detergent and water appropriately, so there's no need to wait for a certain amount of laundry to pile up before washing.

Download [here](#) your 'Five good reasons to invest in commercial laundry appliances for your veterinary practice'



Space can also be a concern for practices considering bringing laundry on-premise, however it can take up a lot less space than you think. Miele Professional's Little Giants take up very little room and can be installed as a space-saving washer-dryer stack with a footprint of less than 1m<sup>2</sup>.

**Miele**

## The benefits of an **efficient and effective laundry** for vets

For most vet practices, laundry is likely to be low on the list of priorities. However, they shouldn't underestimate the benefits of efficient and effective in-house washing and drying.

From a build-up of dirty laundry to expensive engineer call out costs, if the practice's washing machine breaks down it can cause a lot of disruption to the daily workflow. Yet, despite this, almost half of vet practices use domestic washing machines which are not robust enough to manage the day-to-day laundry needs of a busy veterinary practice.

Miele Professional washing machines are tested to last for over 30,000 cycles. That's the equivalent of eight cycles a day, seven days a week for over 10 years.

Sustainability is at the core of every part of the manufacturing process here at Miele, from the supply chain through to the packaging. Miele laundry machines are optimised to consume only the quantities of energy and water they actually need, while still delivering the best possible results.

**Guy Gordon, Veterinary Surgeon & Director at Donald S McGregor & Partners Veterinary Practice**

Having done our sums and weighed up the pros and cons of continuing to outsource our laundry or bring it in-house, the choice was obvious. We now have a far more cost-effective and efficient way of keeping on top of all of our washing and the assurance that we're complying with best practice when it comes to infection control with our laundry processes.

Click on each tab to discover five good reasons to invest in commercial laundry appliances

**Be reassured**   **Go Pro**   **On time**   **Cost effective**   **Space saving**

Commercial washing machines can help ensure the temperatures needed to kill bacteria are maintained during the wash cycle. Miele commercial appliances offer thermal disinfection programmes that contribute to infection control practices.

If you would like advice about your current laundry processes, visit: [miele.co.uk/pro/vets](#) or contact us on 0333 222 1419 or email [professional.info@miele.co.uk](#)

# Choosing the right equipment

**Our research found that almost half of vet practices use domestic washing machines, but what many don't know is whether the domestic machines are capable of meeting the demand of a busy vets practice or the infection control guidelines they should be adhering to.**

## Domestic or commercial

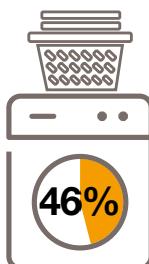
## WRAS compliancy

## Sustainability and lifetime costs

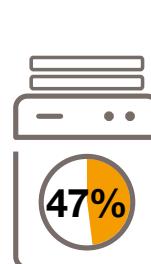
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### Our survey said...

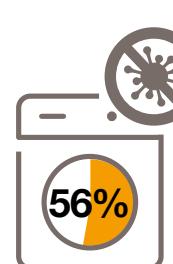
We recently surveyed 100 UK vets to find out more about their laundry procedures and **what their biggest concerns are when it comes to infection control.**



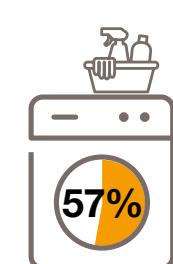
**46%** of vets have a domestic washing machine



**47%** of vets have a domestic tumble dryer



**56%** of vets believe that their current washing machine is effective at killing infectious diseases



**57%** of vets believe their practice could do more to prevent the spread of infection

Domestic machines struggle to cope in a commercial environment as they're not built to handle larger loads and frequent, heavy use. Not only do cycle times typically take a lot longer than a commercial model, but they're also more prone to breakdown as they can become clogged with animal hair. As busy practices will know all too well, machine downtime can have a big knock-on impact on service and productivity.

Commercial machines, on the other hand, are built to handle large loads and be used all day, every day. They're also regularly serviced and maintained by experts to ensure minimal downtime.

Most crucially, however, vets need to be aware that domestic machines are most likely incapable of washing to the high temperatures needed to ensure that any infection is killed. Not only are commercial machines capable of reaching and holding these high temperatures for thermal disinfection to take place, but many also offer specific thermal disinfection programmes.

Finally, domestic washing machines are not Water Regulations Advisory Scheme (WRAS) certified, whereas Miele's commercial washing machines all meet WRAS certification to Risk Category 5. Not familiar with WRAS? Keep reading.

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## WRAS compliance

Any water fitting or appliance that will carry or receive water from the public mains water supply in the UK must comply with the Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations and Scottish Water Byelaws. Different categories of WRAS certification exist depending on business type, but in veterinary practices, all machines must meet WRAS certification to Risk Category 5.

WRAS Certification is issued once the equipment has been independently tested and approved. WRAS-approved washers feature an integral filling system which stops water from back-flowing and contaminating the mains water supply. Ensure that your machine meets these requirements before you invest.



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## Sustainability and lifetime costs

A vet practice will see a lot of patients each day, therefore it's essential that businesses have reliable processes, procedures and equipment in place to ensure the practice runs as smoothly as possible. Not only does investing in reliable, durable machines provide peace of mind that your laundry appliances will be there as and when you need them, but it also brings a number of sustainability and lifetime cost benefits.

A Miele Professional machine is tested to 30,000 cycles (that's the equivalent of eight cycles a day, seven days a week for over 10 years), meaning it will last

a lot longer than a domestic machine, reducing life cycle costs and the potential pain of replacing machines. This means customers can reduce expense in the long term and don't need to invest in new parts or a new machine as frequently, resulting in a smaller contribution to end of life treatment, be it recycling or landfill. In addition, commercial Miele machines feature a number of set programmes that minimise the amounts of energy and water used. The additional savings in utility bills can amount to significant savings in the long term.

**To learn more about Miele's commitment to sustainability, download our report [here](#).**



Sustainability Report 2019

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# Choosing a machine make and model

## Miele Little Giants

If you're struggling for space but need a speedy and efficient on-premise laundry, we'd recommend our Little Giant range.

Miele Little Giants have shorter cycle times for washing and drying meaning they use less energy. These machines are highly versatile and can be easily customised.



## Miele Benchmark machines

Or, if you have a higher throughput, our Benchmark range is perfect for processing larger loads.

These machines have honeycomb drums to ensure items are cleaned without being damaged and fit nicely into a practice's laundry room.



Take a look at the various makes and models we recommend for veterinary businesses [here](#).

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# Washer-disinfectors

Busy veterinary practices may also benefit from investing in a washer-disinfector for the effective cleaning and decontamination of surgical instruments.

**Benefits include;**

Thorough, consistent cleaning and disinfection of surgical instruments to reduce cross contamination



Cost effective with typically low consumption values



Better use of clinical time, allowing vets and vet nurses to focus on caring for animals rather than manually washing instruments



Staff and patient safety – eliminating the need for clinic staff to wash intricate and sharp objects by hand



Careful handling of surgical instruments preserves their quality and longevity



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**PG 8582 Washer-disinfector**

- Liquid dispensing and EcoDry function
- Throughput/cycle eg. 8 DIN mesh trays or 48GYN specula
- Efficient use of resources – variable speed heater pump
- Safety through monitoring – wash pressure and spray arm monitoring
- WRAS-approved product

**PG 8581 Thermal disinfecter**

- With AD water connection, Liquid dispensing and EcoDry function
- Throughput/cycle eg. 22 transmission instruments or 22 suction devices
- Safety through monitoring – wash pressure and spray arm monitoring
- WRAS-approved product

**PG 8536 Washer disinfecter**

- Ideal for larger practices
- With AD water connection
- Throughput/cycle eg. 7 DIN mesh trays or 2 MIS sets
- Safety through spray arm monitoring and automatic mobile unit recognition
- Efficient hot air drying for perfect drying results

[Click here for more info](#)[Click here for more info](#)[Click here for more info](#)

Reputation management

# What do our vet customers say about us?



## Paragon Veterinary Referrals

"We appreciate that our customers have high expectations on staff appearance and cleanliness and hygiene throughout our facility. First impressions matter and the appearance of both our staff and waiting facilities can have a huge impact on our reputation. We're committed to providing our customers with the best possible care at all times and our laundry facility has a crucial role to play in us delivering on this commitment."

**Rebecca Lunn**

Operations co-ordinator at Paragon Veterinary Referrals

[Learn more](#)

## The Ralph

"We are delighted with the quality of wash our laundry gives us. Our vets, nurses and patient care assistants are busy people. The reliability of our appliances is so important to the day to day running of our practice it was essential that we chose appliances that are built to last. For me, Miele was the only option, and the only brand I trust to offer us the reliability we need."

**Iqbal Dhanji**

Co-founder and finance director at The Ralph

[Learn more](#)



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# Ready to learn more?

For more depth on the topics covered in this guide, take a look at the following resources:



**The benefits of an effective and efficient laundry for vets** - five good reasons to invest in commercial laundry appliances

**Reputation management guide** – a practical guide for vets on what matters most to pet owners and the key factors that can improve the reputation of your practice

**Are your laundry appliances up to the job?**  
This guide looks at why it's important to have laundry equipment you can rely upon in a busy practice and what to consider if you're looking to upgrade your in-house laundry.

**'PAWS for thought' infection control infographic and poster**  
– these could work as a colourful printouts for the wall of your laundry facility to remind staff of the correct infection control processes and procedures

**'PAWS for thought'** – a guide to best practice laundry procedures for infection control

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For more information or tailored advice about your current laundry processes, visit: [miele.co.uk/pro/vets](http://miele.co.uk/pro/vets) or contact us on **0333 222 1419** or email [professional.info@miele.co.uk](mailto:professional.info@miele.co.uk)

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