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Veterinary.



DISCOVERY

Veterinary Expertise

Discover award-winning architectural experience and designing specialist veterinary facilities across the UK.

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DESIGN

Expert Insights

Examining how thoughtful design can create spaces that work for animals, owners, and veterinary teams.

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DELIVERY

Case Studies

Explore JDDK projects taken from concept to completion for leading names in the veterinary sector.

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DISCOVER
DESIGN
DELIVER

Letter from Millmount

From our earliest years as a practice, we have specialised in designing complex and highly regulated environments – from hospices and healthcare facilities to veterinary first opinion practices, hospitals and specialist referral centres. The thread that runs through them all is our belief that buildings should work as hard for their staff teams as they do for the animals in their care and their owners.

In the veterinary sector, we’ve worked with some of the UK’s most respected providers and brands, delivering projects that combine clinical precision with comfort, efficiency with future proofing. Whether it’s a state-of-the-art surgical suite, an imaging department with advanced diagnostics, or a welcoming reception where anxious clients can feel at ease, our approach remains constant: to understand your needs fully, collaborate openly, and design with purpose.

Over the years, the quality of our work has been recognised through lasting client relationships, repeat commissions and architectural awards. We achieve this by maintaining an approach that is imaginative, efficient, and works brilliantly in practice.

We hope the case studies in this publication give you a sense of the depth of our experience and the pride we take in delivering exceptional veterinary environments. If you are planning your next project, we would be delighted to talk with you about how we can help bring your vision to life.



Nicky Watson RIBA
Director at JDDK Architects

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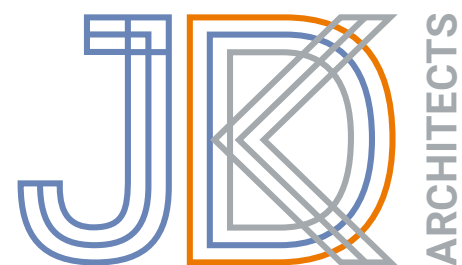
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Veterinary history

Within our 40 years of operations, over the past 12 years JDDK Architects has been trusted to design specialist veterinary facilities across the UK. Our portfolio spans everything from compact community first opinion practices to large-scale, multi-disciplinary centres with advanced clinical capabilities.

Veterinary Centres

- Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield, Phase 1&2 2015, and Phase 3 2018
- Vets for Pets, London x 2, 2018
- Vets for Pets, Washington, 2019
- Barnsley Hospital Vets for Pets, 2020
- Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh, 2020
- DWR Veterinary Specialists Referral Centre, Cambridge, 2023
- St Clair Veterinary Group, Kirkcaldy, 2023



Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield

Our Clients



LINNAEUS

Vets for Pets



Pets at Home



Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield



Delivering clinical and commercial success through design

Design that delivers commercial success for veterinary practices



Nicky Watson,
RIBA, Director at JDDK Architects

A successful veterinary space isn't just about top-tier clinical care – it's about creating an environment that works for everyone who steps through the door. From anxious pet owners to hardworking veterinary teams, a well-designed facility needs to balance efficiency, comfort, and functionality.

At JDDK, we specialise in designing veterinary spaces that support both animal well-being and business success. By focusing on intuitive layouts, stress-reducing environments, and seamless workflow integration, we help veterinary practices operate smoothly while enhancing the client, patient and staff experience.

Here, we explore how our people-and-pet-centred approach creates veterinary spaces that are not only welcoming and effective but also commercially sustainable.



DWR Veterinary Specialists
Referral Centre, Cambridge



DWR Veterinary Specialists
Referral Centre, Cambridge

Essential design considerations for pets and their people

At JDDK, we design veterinary practices and referral hospitals with people and animals in mind equally. A well-designed veterinary space isn't just about clinical efficiency; it's about reducing stress for pets, creating a welcoming and calming experience for owners, and ensuring that staff can work effectively. Our approach considers everything from workflow and hygiene to natural light, soundproofing, and staff welfare, all of which contribute to a practice's long-term commercial success.

A key part of veterinary design is zoning – making sure that different functions within the practice are clearly separated. Public areas, like reception and waiting rooms, should feel welcoming and calm, while also being distinct from clinical areas. We will always advise our clients to design in separate waiting areas (and ideally separate consulting and treatment rooms) for dogs and cats because many animals are already anxious when they arrive, and keeping species apart helps reduce their, and their owners', stress.

The flow of movement through the building is just as important. The layout should allow owners, staff, and animals to move intuitively through the space without bottlenecks or stressful interactions. Consultation rooms should be private yet accessible, allowing vets to work efficiently while making pet owners feel comfortable discussing concerns. Treatment and surgery spaces, meanwhile, need to be meticulously planned to support smooth processes. One of the biggest challenges we solve is designing routes that let distressed animals be moved discreetly – particularly in end-of-life cases – so that their journey through the building is as calm as possible. Soundproofing is another vital factor; barking dogs, medical equipment, and general noise can create a stressful environment if not carefully managed, so we use acoustic solutions to keep the space as peaceful as possible.

Lighting plays a big role in shaping the atmosphere of a practice. We prioritise natural light wherever possible because it makes the environment more comfortable and welcoming for both staff and clients. However, in treatment rooms, we carefully balance daylight with specialist artificial lighting that provides the clarity needed for medical procedures. Striking this balance is essential to ensuring both clinical precision and psychological comfort for those using the space.

“
It's about reducing stress for pets, creating a welcoming and calming experience for owners, and ensuring that staff can work effectively.

Enhancing staff wellbeing

We also place a huge emphasis on psychological comfort for staff welfare. Veterinary work is emotionally and physically demanding, and a well-designed practice or hospital should provide dedicated spaces where staff can work quietly or recharge. We incorporate break rooms, private offices, confidential meeting or telephone space, often using biophilic design principles proven to enhance wellbeing. Some of our most forward-thinking clients are now investing in wellness areas for their teams, recognising that burnout is a real challenge in the industry. Creating thoughtful, comfortable staff spaces make a tangible difference to the long-term success of a practice.

Planning specialist spaces

Another crucial element is space planning for specialist machinery. Veterinary practices and referral hospitals in particular, require highly specific equipment, which needs to be factored into the spatial layout and infrastructure. This ensures there is adequate space for fitting out, in use and for maintenance, power supply, and ventilation to support them. This is particularly important in referral hospitals, where advanced diagnostic, imaging and surgical capabilities must be seamlessly integrated without disrupting the overall flow of the practice.



Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield



DWR Veterinary Specialists Referral Centre, Cambridge

Delivering clinical and commercial success through design

Every veterinary practice we work on is different. Some are small, independent clinics, while others are large referral hospitals requiring complex medical spaces. That's why we take a bespoke approach to every project, collaborating closely with veterinary professionals to create spaces that work for their specific needs. Beyond meeting regulatory requirements, our goal is always to design buildings that make everyday life easier for vets, pet owners, and animals alike.

For existing veterinary practices looking to improve their spaces, we take a strategic approach to retrofitting. Many clinics operate out of older buildings and upgrading them while maintaining daily operations can be a challenge, but it is still possible to make upgrades that have a big impact. We focus on phased improvements, ensuring that critical areas like treatment rooms remain operational while other spaces are modernised. Retrofitting can involve reconfiguration of spaces, installation of new equipment, upgrading building fabric, improving accessibility, or creating a new identity for a practice, all while working within the constraints of an existing structure.

Energy efficiency is another major focus in our designs, supporting sustainability as well as budget management. We look at everything from low carbon energy generation and energy-efficient building services to sustainable building materials and drainage solutions. Durability is also key – choosing hard-wearing materials that withstand heavy use ensures the practice remains in good condition for years to come.

Ultimately, a well-designed veterinary practice is one that blends practicality with compassion. It needs to function smoothly, feel welcoming, and support both the emotional and operational demands of a busy veterinary setting. As the number of pet owners, and the lifespans of pets continue to rise, we believe that the importance of veterinary facility design is greater than ever, and it isn't just about treating animals – it's about creating a space where everyone, from pets to people, can have the best experience possible.



Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh



DWR Veterinary Specialists Referral Centre, Cambridge

CASE STUDIES

DWR, Cambridge



DWR Veterinary Specialists
Referral Centre, Cambridge

DWR Veterinary Specialists Referral Centre, Cambridge: Specialist referral centre designed for advanced care.



Veterinary
Specialists

Pets
at Home

LINNAEUS

DWR Veterinary Specialists is a flagship multi-disciplinary referral hospital, designed to support one of the largest and most advanced veterinary teams in Europe. Working closely with the client from concept to completion, we created a purpose-built facility that houses state-of-the-art imaging, surgical and rehabilitation spaces alongside comfortable client areas and well-considered staff facilities. The building's layout is driven by clinical flow, infection control and operational efficiency, while still providing a calm, welcoming environment for animals and their owners.

JDDK Architects were appointed alongside interior designers, Spacelab, to design the fitout of a brand new 2500msq "shell" building and existing building alterations, on the site of the well-established DWR veterinary referral hospital.

Our work began by working closely with the hospital Director and individual staff members to develop a comprehensive design brief and schedule of accommodation, considering both current veterinary activity and projected business development.

Design proposals for how the required spaces would be laid out within the building were developed, incorporating feedback from the senior management team at DWR as well as the wider veterinary group at every design stage. Core design principles were followed e.g. separation of clients from patient

and medical areas; separation of cats and dogs (DWR have been awarded Gold-level cat-friendly clinic (CFC) accreditation by the International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM)); flow of patients between key medical and diagnostic spaces; variation of spaces for colleagues to work in and meet; design for colleague well-being.

JDDK also led the design team in the technical delivery stages of the project, producing fully coordinated and highly detailed design information for the construction of these state-of-the-art facilities.

DWR Veterinary Specialists is now one of the largest specialist multi-disciplinary veterinary referral centres in Europe.



First floor



Ground floor

CASE STUDIES

Wear Referrals, Sedgefield

Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield:
Delivering a flagship companion animal hospital.



LINNAEUS

The Wear Referrals veterinary referral and emergency hospital at Bradbury outside Sedgefield opened in 2015 – a Centre of Excellence equipped with the very latest state-of-the-art facilities for specialist animal care. With MRI and CT scanners, four operating theatres, a chemotherapy and rehabilitation ward, dedicated intensive care unit and staff training facilities, the hospital is purposefully situated close to an A1 motorway junction to allow rapid and easy access for all referred clients and emergencies.

The high-tech building features a curved sedum roof to one wing, biomass heating and photovoltaic panels for green energy and an integrated landscaping scheme to minimise the building's impact on the surrounding landscape and provide a pleasant natural setting for visitors and staff.

The building is designed to sit sensitively within the adjacent rural landscape but at the same time be a strong architectural statement when seen either at speed from the adjacent road and rail line or at close range. The internal layout is purposefully configured around the flow of veterinary work with the reception area, for example, in the south-facing wing providing comforting, bright and airy front-of house facilities for anxious pet owners whilst the northern wing provides the highly serviced operating theatres, x-ray and chemotherapy facilities. The central two storey section contains core clinical support functions with offices and staff welfare accommodation on the first floor, taking advantage of the fine outlook over the surrounding landscape

Externally, the low profile curved roofs, some sedum covered reflect the gently undulating landscape whilst the fragmented building

mass reduces the visual scale. This, together with integrated landscaping and the use of facing materials which are in harmony with the setting, allows the new 1,600 sq m structure to have a very low profile from afar, although highly impressive at close quarters.

As with all our work in the veterinary sector, the scheme at Wear Referrals was delivered from concept through to handover utilising 3-D Revit software and included the full site and buildings. JDDK worked closely with the client throughout the design process to understand, capture and model their bespoke clinical requirements unique to their project. This close partnership led to the development of detailed room designs with coordinated specifications to ensure that the client's exacting clinical requirements were delivered.

These bespoke in-house objects coordinated with the technical literature enabled accurate full 3D renders direct from the model for the client to use in consultation with staff and in their literature, as well as communicate the precise requirements to the contractor.

JDDK have developed proposals for a further phase of development on the Wear Referrals site, which when built will more than double the floor area of the hospital.

Awards



2015 Durham County Environment Awards, Built Environment



2015 Durham County Environment Awards, Sustainability



2015 Durham County Environment Awards, Sustainability - Outstanding Award



“We’re absolutely delighted to have moved into this new centre, now the leading veterinary facility in the North of England, which has allowed us to further expand our referral services and thus provide a better service to referring vets from not only the North East but also all areas from Liverpool to Edinburgh.”

Dr Gerard te Lintelo,
former Veterinary Surgeon and
Clinical Director of Wear Referrals



Wear Referrals Small Animal Hospital, Sedgefield

Vets for Pets, Washington



Vets for Pets, Washington

Vets for Pets, Washington:
Creating a modern practice
within a retail environment.

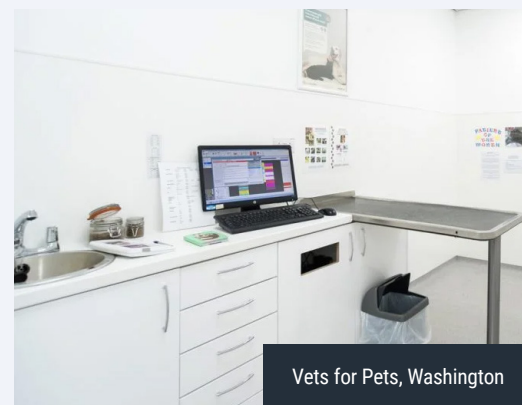


This Vets for Pets first opinion practice demonstrates how high-quality veterinary facilities can be seamlessly integrated into existing buildings, whatever their former use. Our design maximises the available footprint to include consulting rooms, a dedicated surgical theatre, prep and imaging areas, and a spacious, light-filled reception. The result is a practice that feels open and inviting to clients, while providing the clinical infrastructure needed for a high standard of care.

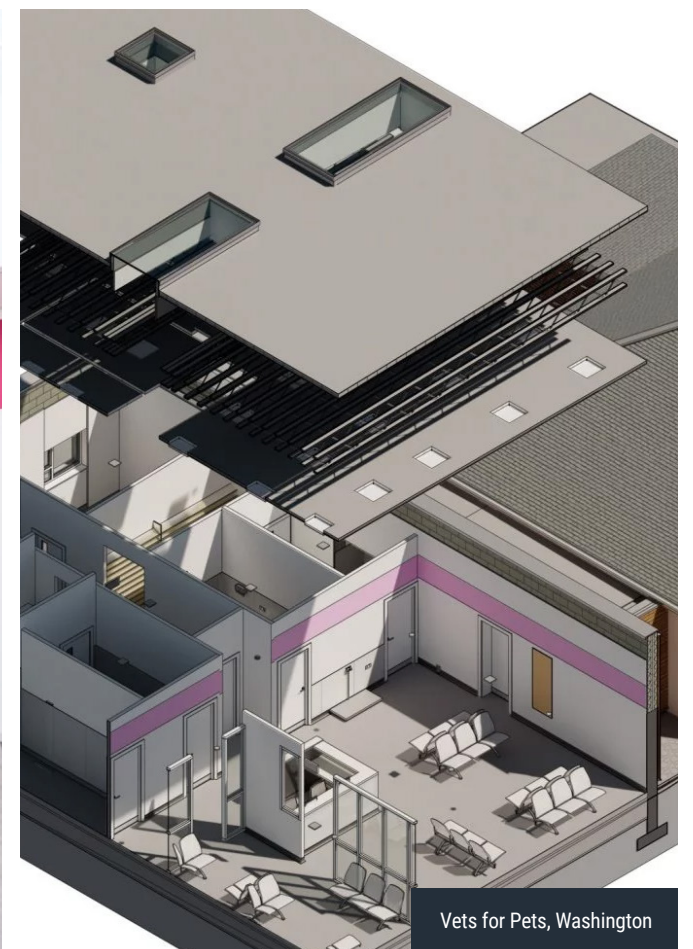
The Vets for Pets surgery in Washington, Tyne and Wear was functioning in a former bungalow and had outgrown the space available. JDDK Architects were appointed to reconfigure the adjacent bungalow which the surgery had recently acquired, to create a new image for the surgery and expand its facilities.

A new accessible entrance now leads to a light and bright reception and waiting area including a separated area for cats with a designated route to the cat consult. Bringing daylight into the centre of the building plan was important to enhance the quality of the spaces for clients and for the wellbeing of colleagues.

The look of the bungalow was completely transformed by a flat roof with rooflights, generous window openings and timber cladding to the outside, all to give a new and modern identity to the surgery.



Vets for Pets, Washington



Vets for Pets, Washington

Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh



Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh

Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh:

Setting a new benchmark for veterinary care in Scotland.



Veterinary
Specialists
Scotland



LINNAEUS

Veterinary Specialists Scotland, located in Edinburgh, is a cutting-edge referral hospital developed with Pets at Home. The facility offers advanced diagnostic and treatment capabilities within a highly flexible, future-proofed design. Large clinical spaces are paired with client areas that provide privacy and comfort during often stressful visits. From technical planning to material selection, every element of the design reflects our commitment to supporting veterinary teams in delivering the highest standard of care.

VSS is located on the outskirts of Edinburgh close to excellent road networks, in what was previously a three storey head-quarters office building.

JDDK Architects worked with the new veterinary team to develop proposals for the fit out of part of the building into a veterinary referral hospital.

All of the ground floor and part of the first floor has now been converted into the new facility, with options for future expansion into the upper floors.

The hospital incorporates five dog consult rooms and a separated cat consultation room. Dog and cat wards are supplemented by dedicated isolation kennels and an ICU. Two operating theatres, associated prep areas and medical spaces are grouped together, whilst a diagnostic and imaging zone is located in a quieter area of the building and is designed to provide access to a visiting MRI truck.

Colleague facilities are split across two floors and include a welfare room that is in the quietest corner of the building and takes advantage of views over the landscaped grounds.



Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh



Veterinary Specialists Scotland, Edinburgh

Here, we share our design 'dos and don'ts' for you to consider when you look to refurbish a space or build a new facility. We cover navigation for pets and people, prioritising your team and tech, and testing to make sure your space works in practice.

✓ Zone, zone, zone!

Efficient and safe practice depends on separating core activities. Create distinct zones and plan their adjacencies carefully. For example:

- Client-facing areas (waiting rooms, consultation spaces) should be visually and physically separate from clinical areas.
- Emergency routes should allow animals to move quickly to treatment spaces.
- Staff rest areas should be away from clinical zones and acoustically shielded.

✗ Overlook the needs of cats

Design with feline welfare in mind:

- Provide separate entrances, waiting rooms, and consultation spaces for cats and dogs.
- Ensure cat wards are designed so cats cannot see one another.
- Incorporate cat-friendly features that give alternative places for them to move to in consultation rooms such as deep windowsills and higher-level platforms or shelves.

✓ Make the most of your space

Find efficiencies without compromising functionality, for example:

- Stack laundry equipment.
- Create multi-functional spaces (e.g., staff rest areas that can double as evening training rooms).

✗ Sacrifice functionality for efficiency

Compromising space for the sake of squeezing more in will cost you long term. Examples:

- Insufficient room to work safely around patients.
- Too few kennels leading to underused operating theatres.

✓ Prioritise your team

Think about what would make your team's work easier, less stressful and more efficient. This could mean:

- Private booths for calls or dictation.
- Places for meetings and collaboration away from clinical spaces.
- Adequate, well-planned storage.

✗ Forget about the future

Plan for both current and projected needs. Consider:

- Business growth and service expansion.
- Site planning and spatial arrangements that allow for future extensions.
- Service capacities (power, water, ventilation) sized with tomorrow in mind.

✓ Let the daylight in

Natural light and views of nature reduce stress and improve wellbeing. Prioritise daylight and outdoor views in:

- Waiting areas.
- Circulation spaces, where possible.
- Staff welfare and non-clinical workspaces.

✗ Ignore acoustics

Noise management is essential for calm, efficient practice. Plan for:

- Floors, walls, and furnishings that limit sound reverberation and transfer.
- Locating noise-sensitive areas (e.g., cardiology, labs) away from loud zones.

✓ Create an easily navigable environment

Clients under stress need clarity:

- Design spaces so visitors intuitively know where to go without relying on excessive signage.
- Include views to the outside from circulation spaces, which will assist with orientation.

✗ Underestimate feline escapologists

- Locate cat consult and treatment rooms so escape attempts can be contained within secure zones.

✓ Test real-world scenarios

Take a virtual walk through your design as if you're a client, a staff member, or a patient:

- Is there a quiet, non-clinical space for grieving clients to exit privately?
- Can nervous dogs wait outside away from other animals?
- Does a surgeon have a secure route to the theatre once scrubbed in?
- Can cats move through the facility without encountering dogs?

✗ Forget sustainability

Every new build or refurbishment should minimise environmental impact. Consider:

- Energy-efficient systems and renewable power.
- Water-saving fixtures and rainwater harvesting.
- Low-carbon, recyclable, locally and ethically sourced materials.
- Biodiverse landscaping and sustainable drainage schemes.



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