

BRAND CONCEPT · THE STRATEGY HALF · €995 · A SECOND LOOK

Ardglas Veterinary

A mixed practice losing farm work to a bigger group and pet work to a new clinic in town. Who it is for, what it is actually selling, and the reason to choose it.

2

customers, and only one of them can be served properly

1

position that survives a rival reading it

5

messages, written

Portfolio sample. Ardglas is invented — the same €995 service as the Sediment strategy, on a business with an entirely different problem. No palette and no typeface here either; strategy first, identity second.

THE SITUATION

Two businesses in one building, pulling in opposite directions.

Ardglas does farm work and pet work out of the same premises with the same three vets. Farm is 58% of revenue and falling — a corporate group forty minutes away is undercutting on routine herd work and winning contracts on price and on out-of-hours cover you cannot match.

Pet work is 42% and growing, but a new small-animal clinic opened in the town in 2023 with evening hours, a nicer waiting room and a booking app. It is taking the exact customers who were easiest to keep.

The instinct is to defend both. That is the thing this document is going to argue against.

What was looked at

Three years of revenue by species and service. Call-out logs by hour. The corporate group's published farm pricing and the town clinic's opening hours and prices. Eleven client conversations at the counter and on farms.

The uncomfortable finding

You cannot beat the group on farm price and you cannot beat the town clinic on convenience. Both are structural — they have scale and they have a purpose-built room. Competing on either is a slow loss disguised as effort.

You are not losing to better vets. You are losing to two businesses that each do one thing.

THREE YEARS, BY SPECIES

	THREE YEARS AGO	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	DIRECTION
Farm — routine / contract	€218k	€191k	€154k	Losing on price
Farm — emergency & out-of-hours	€61k	€68k	€79k	Growing, unpriced
Pet — routine	€148k	€151k	€139k	Losing to the town
Pet — same-day / urgent	€22k	€28k	€37k	Growing quietly

Illustrative. The two lines that are growing are the two nobody is marketing, and both are urgency rather than routine. That is the whole strategy sitting in a table nobody had drawn.

WHO YOU ARE FOR

The farmer with a problem at eleven at night.

Not the farmer buying routine herd health on a contract — that is a purchasing decision and the group will win it every time. The customer this practice is built around is the one with a calving gone wrong, a downer cow, or something they cannot identify, at an hour when a call centre answers the other number.

They are not price-sensitive in that moment and they remember for a decade who came out. There are roughly four hundred such farms within your realistic travel time, and you already know most of them by name.

What they are buying

Somebody who will answer, who knows the farm, and who will be there in forty minutes. Not veterinary skill — they assume that of everybody. Certainty at an hour when nothing else is certain.

Who you are not for

The 400-cow contract buying routine work on annual tender. Chasing it costs your best hours and loses on price anyway. Say it out loud to yourselves once and the strategy becomes obvious.

AND THE PET SIDE

Pet work stays, but it stops being a growth strategy and becomes a daytime business that fills the hours between farm calls. That is not a demotion — it is what it already is. What changes is that you stop spending money trying to out-convenience a clinic built for convenience, and start being the practice that will see a dog the same day when the other one is booked out until Thursday.

Same-day, always

Your actual advantage. The town clinic books three days out; you have gaps because farm calls move.

No evening hours

Stop trying. Evenings are when farm calls happen and you cannot staff both.

No app

A phone that is answered by somebody who knows the animal beats an app, and it is the thing you already have.

WHAT GIVING SOMETHING UP ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

You will lose farms. Probably twenty to thirty of the routine-contract ones over two years, and some of them will be names you have known for decades. That is going to feel like failure and it will be reported to you as failure by whoever answers the phone.

The ones that stay are worth more. An emergency-led relationship bills more per farm and does not go out to tender. The test is not how many farms are on the books; it is what the average one is worth and whether the phone rings at night.

THE POSITION

Tested against whether a rival could take it.

CANDIDATE	COULD A RIVAL COPY IT?	VERDICT
The best vets in the county	Claimed by all three, provable by none	Fails
The most affordable practice	The group has scale you do not	Fails
The most modern facilities	The town clinic was built in 2023	Fails
The practice that answers at 2am and knows your farm	Only by living here and taking the call themselves — which is precisely what a corporate group cannot do	Holds

THE POSITION, IN ONE SENTENCE

Ardglas is the practice that picks up at two in the morning and already knows the farm.

It tells you what to do on a Tuesday, it costs you something real, and a rival reading it cannot act on it. Those are the three tests.

What it costs you

Out-of-hours is exhausting and it is the reason people leave this profession. This position commits three vets to a rota they are already quietly doing for free. It should be priced properly and it should be shared honestly — and if the three of you cannot sustain it, the position is wrong and there is no point printing it on anything.

WHY THE GROUP CANNOT FOLLOW YOU HERE

Their economics forbid it

A thirty-vet group runs out-of-hours through a rota and a call centre because that is the only way it scales. Answering personally is a diseconomy, and diseconomies are exactly what large competitors cannot buy.

They do not know the farm

Whoever is on call has probably never been to it. That is not carelessness, it is arithmetic — thirty vets across four hundred farms cannot hold the knowledge three vets across four hundred can.

They will beat you on price forever

Which is why routine is not the battleground. Ceding it is what frees the hours that make the rota possible.

WHAT THAT MEANS YOU MUST DO

Six decisions that follow from one sentence.

Price out-of-hours properly

It is the product now. Currently absorbed into the callout fee and effectively free. A published night rate is not a penalty — it is what makes the rota survivable.

Answer the phone yourselves

No answering service at night, ever. The whole position dies the first time a farmer gets a call centre at two in the morning.

Know the farm before you arrive

Herd notes in the van, accessible on a phone. *I already know your farm* is a claim you have to be able to demonstrate in the first thirty seconds.

Drop the tender chasing

Stop bidding for routine herd contracts against the group. It costs your best hours and it loses.

Guarantee same-day for pets

Publish it. It is the one thing the town clinic structurally cannot promise, and it costs you nothing because the gaps already exist.

Stop apologising for the building

It is a working practice, not a waiting room. Refurbishing it to compete on comfort is money spent on somebody else's argument.

TONE OF VOICE

Say this

"Ring the mobile. It is one of us, not a service."

"Night callout is €180. It is a real cost and we would rather you knew it in advance."

"We will see the dog today. Come in whenever suits."

Not this

"Comprehensive veterinary care for all your animal needs." — true of every practice ever.

"State-of-the-art facilities." — you do not have them and it is not the argument.

"Passionate about animal welfare." — assumed. Saying it is a small confession that you have nothing else.

THE FIVE MESSAGES

Repeat these until they are boring.

01**You ring a mobile, and a vet answers it.**

The central one. It is the difference from the group, it is verifiable in one phone call, and it is the sentence a farmer will repeat to another farmer.

02**We already know your farm.**

The second half of the position. It only works if the notes are actually in the van, which is why it is a message and an operational change at the same time.

03**Your dog will be seen today.**

The pet-side message. One promise, easily checked, and the only thing on that side worth saying.

04**The night rate is published.**

Publishing a price nobody wants to pay is a trust move. It also stops the conversation about money happening at four in the morning in a shed.

05**Three vets, and you will get one of them.**

Small is the argument, not the apology. The group has thirty vets and you will meet whichever one is rostered.

WHERE EACH MESSAGE IS SAID

MESSAGE	WHERE	SAID BY
You ring a mobile, and a vet answers	The answerphone, the van, the invoice footer	Everyone, constantly
We already know your farm	In person, on arrival, in the first thirty seconds	Whoever is out
Your dog will be seen today	The window, the phone greeting, the website	Reception
The night rate is published	Website, answerphone, in advance of the call	Written, not spoken
Three vets, and you will get one of them	The website, and on farms when tender comes up	The partners

Four of the five are spoken rather than printed. A practice's brand is almost entirely what is said on the phone at an awkward hour, which is why this document has no logo in it.

WHAT THIS IS JUDGED ON

Out-of-hours calls answered, and revenue per farm client.

Two numbers, both already in your system. Not client count — a practice can lose the right clients and grow the wrong ones for a year without noticing.

Out-of-hours calls, per month

31 → 45

Illustrative. If the position is true, this rises — and it rising is uncomfortable, which is why the rate must be priced first.

Revenue per farm client

**€2.1k →
€2.6k**

Fewer farms, worth more each. If total farm client count falls while this rises, the strategy is working exactly as designed.

**Losing the tender farms is the plan, not
the problem.**

WHAT TO DO FIRST

Four things, and two of them are conversations.

One. The three of you agree the out-of-hours rota is the business, in writing, or you do not adopt this position. Everything else depends on that one conversation and it is not a marketing decision.

Two. Publish the night rate. On the website, on the answerphone, on the invoice.

Three. Get herd notes onto a phone. Whatever is cheapest and works in a yard with no signal.

Four. Tell the twelve farms you most want to keep, in person, that the mobile is answered by a vet. Not a letter. Twelve conversations.

What this document does not solve

Whether three vets can sustain this rota for five years, and whether one of you wants to buy the others out. Both came up, both are real, and neither is a branding question — they are partnership questions and they are worth more of your time than anything on these pages.

Ardglas is invented. It exists as a second look at the strategy half of the €995 brand concept — the same format as Sediment, on a business whose problem is structural rather than perceptual, to show that the answer is sometimes to give something up.