

21st CENTURY FLOORING FOR VETERINARY PRACTICES



Hygienic, hard-wearing and practical a resin floor system offers significant benefits over traditional sheet vinyl or ceramic tiles, delivering a comprehensive solution for today's veterinary practice.

Tony Hills, MD for Ryebrook Resins Ltd highlights the different systems available and advises on cost, planning and installation of a resin floor.

Up to the job

In brief, resin floors are manufactured using sophisticated combinations of different chemicals with a curing reaction taking place in situ to produce the resin finish. A broad range of systems are available but it is worthwhile checking individual supplier's commitment to quality. Here an ISO 9002 BS5750 certificate should be sufficient to ensure consistency of both product and installation.

Traditionally veterinary practices have opted for either sheet vinyl or ceramic floor tiles. Over a relatively short period however vinyl tends to lift at the joints whilst tiles are easily cracked, creating hard-to-clean areas where bacteria can grow. Being entirely seamless, a resin floor has no weak spots whilst a good level of impact resistance minimises the risk of damage to the surface.

A quick clean

With no cracks for dirt and grime to become embedded in, resin is incredibly easy to clean and, with the added benefits of impact and abrasion resistance, a pristine finish with minimum scratching can be maintained for longer. Resin floors are usually dressed 100-150mm up the walls, creating a completely sealed area. Known as coved skirting, this protects the edges against knocks and scuffing and allows water to be freely used to wash down the floor. Depending on the level of hygiene required, a traditional mop and bucket may be sufficient although a scrubbing machine with vacuum pick-up combined with appropriate detergents is often recommended.

Hygiene first

Specifically developed to meet stringent Health & Safety requirements for hospitals and food catering facilities, some systems are particularly relevant for animal operating theatres. Easy cleaning allows for quick turn-around of precious resources and efficient scheduling of operations.

Animal-friendly

Creating unnecessary stress, a slippery floor is frightening for animals to walk on. A slip-resistant finish can be added to any resin floor system helping reduce the risk of accidents to staff, visitors and animals. Popular in animal facilities in Europe, a specialist multi-layer flake system results in a dimpled floor finish that is textured but not rough, making it kind to tender paws.

Easy on the eye

Available in a full range of colours, a high impact design can easily be created using resin systems whilst contrasting lines can be added using specialist epoxy paint to create demarcation between work areas.

Installation issues

In a new-build situation, there can be a time delay of several months while the concrete sub-floor is dried to ensure moisture is not sealed. If time constraints are an issue, a surface damp-proof membrane, or DPM, can be laid. By giving the resin finish effective protection against moisture, installation can go ahead within a just few weeks of concrete, or sand and cement screed, being laid.

In a refurbishment situation, once the existing floor material is removed the concrete base is prepared using diamond grinding or mechanical planing.

Which system where?

There is such a wide variety of systems available, seeking professional advice is essential. Influencing factors will include required hygiene levels, required impact, scratch, chemical and slip resistance as well as desired aesthetics.

Regarding cost, the more you pay, the longer the floor should last. It is a question of weighing up the disruption involved in re-laying the floor against the greater initial financial outlay for a more long-lasting solution. A high-build resin coating would last for approximately 5 years in an industrial setting and cost in the region of £10/m². A more resilient flow-grade finish costs a little more at £20/m² but has an expected life span closer to 15-20yrs. Epoxy screeds can deliver up to 30yrs of useful working life but start at about £40/m².

How long?

If the job is fast-tracked, an average-sized veterinary practice could be refurbished over a long weekend, successfully minimising down-time. The preparation work can be completed on Friday evening, with the screed and finishing coat laid on Saturday, early Sunday morning. As long as the heating system in the building is capable of maintaining a temperature of about 20°C, this allows sufficient cure time for the floor to be touch-dry by Monday. Initial care needs to be taken, as the floor would not be completely hardened for at least a couple of days.

For larger areas, or more complex installations, it may be more appropriate to work on a phased basis, perhaps moving equipment between rooms and vacating specific areas one at a time.

A professional future

Clearly then, a resin floor can transform a practice into a smart, gleaming 21st century facility, helping to project an image of professionalism that inspires the confidence of pet owners whilst providing employees and animal patients with a cleaner, healthier and safer environment.

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