

Veterinary Science's Faculty Day highlights quality of research

By CvB

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Prof Moritz van Vuuren of the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases (left) receives the Bayer Award for Researcher of the Year 2012 from Dr Clint Austin, representing Bayer Animal Health, at the Faculty Day cocktail function.

The Faculty of Veterinary Science hosted its annual Faculty Day on Friday, 6 September 2012. Despite power interruptions caused by the weather, the successful day emphasised an increase in the quality and scope of research and produced many highlights.

Being the focal point of the Faculty's academic year, Faculty Day 2012 produced no less than 26 oral presentations and 27 poster presentations all of which were generally regarded as of high standard in quality and particularly relevant in support of the University of Pretoria's mission to become a research intensive University. The day, which annually serves as an event for showcasing the research activities within the Faculty to colleagues and peers was well attended by staff members, visitors and sponsor companies alike. A parallel student programme was also part of the proceedings.

One of the highlights of Faculty Day 2012 was the presentation of the Sir Arnold Theiler Memorial Lecture by Prof N James MacLachlan, Distinguished Professor in the Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology in the School of Veterinary Medicine of the University of California and Extraordinary Professor in the Faculty's own department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases. Prof MacLachlan delivered a very thought-provoking lecture entitled *Emerging viral diseases, the example of bluetongue, from Theiler to climate change*, a focus on what we as a global community might expect in the future in terms of the emergence of vector-borne diseases driven by climate change with specific reference to dramatic recent changes in the global distribution of bluetongue, an insect-transmitted disease of livestock first described in South Africa already over a century ago.

As is also customary on Faculty Day, various teaching and research awards were made to Faculty members for their outstanding contributions to teaching and research. This year the Bayer Researcher of the Year 2012 award went to Prof Moritz van Vuuren of the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases while Ms Lizette du Plessis of the Department of Anatomy and Physiology was honoured with the OBP Young Researcher of the Year 2012 award. The best paper at Faculty Day (sponsored by Bayer) was judged to be that of Dr CK Lim for his presentation *A comparison of transthoracic echocardiographic measurements to allometric scaling derived values in clinically normal adult dachshunds*. The best poster award for 2012, also sponsored by Bayer went to Dr Elrien Scheepers of the Department of Companion Animal Clinical Studies (CACS) for her research poster entitled *Evaluation of serum amyloid A, haptoglobin, nucleated cell count, total protein*

and haemolysis in peritoneal fluid for differentiation of medical and surgical colic in horses.

The other prize winners were as follows:

- Pfizer Lecturer of the Year 2012 - Prof Leon Prozesky (Paraclinical Sciences, Pathology)
- Instavet Young Lecturer of the Year 2012 - Dr Catriona Lyle (CACS)
- Pfizer Veterinary Nursing Lecturer of the Year 2012 - Dr Elrien Scheepers (CACS)
- A special Theiler Memorial Trust Medal was awarded to Dr Roy Bengis

At the evening's cocktail function the organising committee of the 2012 inaugural and very successful *Run 4 Rhinos* student initiative, handed a cheque for R65 000 to Dr Cindy Harper, Manager of the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) in support of the RhODIS project that is managed by the VGL, collecting DNA samples of rhinos across the country to create a database using the unique DNA profile of individual rhinos.



In the picture on the left, Ms Lizette du Plessis receives the OBP Young Researcher of the Year 2012 award from Dr Steven Cornelius, CEO of Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) while Prof Leon Prozesky was awarded the Pfizer Lecturer of the Year 2012 award by Mr Llewellyn Sinclair of Pfizer