



# Community Engagement Newsletter

Faculty of Veterinary Science  
Winter 2011



## Introduction to Jacques van Rooyen

**Dr Quixi Sonntag & Mr Jacques van Rooyen  
(Former and New Community Engagement  
Chairperson respectively)**

After almost three years as Chairperson of the Community Engagement Committee, the time has come for me to hand over to another colleague. I'd like to thank the Dean and my colleagues on the Committee for the opportunity to play a role in the development of community engagement at the Faculty of Veterinary Science. It has been a privilege to represent our Faculty at the community engagement forums and meetings that are regularly held at the University of Pretoria and to interact with other community engagement stakeholders. It was fun organising our first interdisciplinary curricular community engagement seminar at the Faculty and actually implementing some community engagement ideas within the veterinary curriculum. Thank you for all the support over the last two-and-a-half years from colleagues, students and support staff who have made a difference in a variety of communities and have taught me so much. I would like to especially thank the Community Engagement Coordinator, Mr Eugene Machimana, whose enthusiasm and diligence have been (and continue to be) an asset to veterinary community engagement. It is with great confidence that I hand over the Community Engagement Portfolio to the new Chairperson, Mr Jacques van Rooyen from the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, who is closely involved with the Faculty's community projects in the Mnisi area. Welcome to your new position, Jacques, and we wish you much success and enjoyment in your endeavours. May community engagement at our Faculty go from strength to strength under your leadership!

After completing his BSc(Agric) in Animal Science and BSc(Hons) in Wildlife Management degrees at UP in 2003, Jacques has been primarily involved in the wildlife industry, both professionally and through research associated with his MSc. During these years he spent countless days criss-crossing South Africa and became more and more aware of the ever-important wildlife/livestock interface and his growing belief that the future of conservation relies on the appropriate understanding and development of the communities on the other side of the fence. He learned to appreciate and respect these communities as he grew up farming in Lydenburg, Mpumalanga.

In 2008 he became involved in the Mnisi Community Programme, coordinating the collection of baseline information to guide the development of the newly founded programme. In 2010 he enrolled as a full-time PhD student in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases analysing the livestock production and animal health systems in the Mnisi community. In September 2010 he became a full-time research officer in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases with the coordination of research projects in Mnisi and associated feedback to the community as some of his core responsibilities. His passion for and involvement in community engagement led him to become involved in the community engagement structures of the Faculty and subsequent election as Chairperson of the Community Engagement Committee for the next term of three years.

The Community Engagement Committee at the Faculty gives much credit for its success to the hard work of Dr Quixi Sonntag, the pioneering Community Engagement Chairperson. She has tirelessly invested much in community engagement and she has built a strong foundation for the incoming Chairperson. Her invaluable contribution to community engagement will still be esteemed as she has a wealth of experience in veterinary science.



*Photo: Jacques giving feedback to farmers in the Mnisi Community together with Gypsy Mathumba, Animal Health Technician from Mpumalanga Veterinary Services.*

# Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC)

*Sr Sarah Johnson (Liaison and Communications, OVAH)*

MAHC opened its doors to the public on Monday, 7 February 2011. The clinic is housed in a section of the Technical Services Building on UP's Mamelodi Campus (previously Vista). Campus Director Edwin Smith, together with Prof Gerry Swan, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, conceived the idea of an animal health clinic a number of years ago, and after identifying suitable premises, gave the go-ahead for the renovations required.

The MAHC is well positioned as it adjoins the Mae Jemison Reading Room which is a beautiful library established to give local school children access to the latest scientific books and information.

The clinic itself consists of two consulting rooms, a small lab area, a general procedure room, a theatre, a change area, toilets and a small kitchen. Much of the equipment required (ie tables, a microscope, theatre lights, q-carts, desks and chairs etc) was sourced from within the OVAH, and the rest was purchased.



Dr Cherri Liebenberg was appointed as the veterinarian at MAHC, and she is assisted by a final-year veterinary student and an animal caretaker from the OVAH. Students rotate at MAHC during the Outpatients Session of their clinical year. The clinic currently operates from 09:00 to 14:30 weekdays in order to give the team time to drive back and forth from the OVAH.

The aim of the clinic is to supply Mamelodi residents with basic veterinary healthcare services such as vaccination,

deworming, sterilisation, endo- and ectoparasite control etc, and also to treat common diseases such as biliary (babesia). Minor procedures under anaesthesia are also performed, but animals requiring radiographs or any intensive or complicated procedures are directed to the OVAH. Fees for vaccinations, deworming, consultations and medications are very modest and aimed at recovering only basic costs. Dipping is done for free to encourage Mamelodi residents to bring their dogs for a regular dip and so help prevent the spread of tick-borne diseases. Although quiet for the first few weeks after opening, the clinic now generally sees between 6 and 20 patients a day, and this is certain to increase substantially after the official opening in July.

Advertising flyers were produced to announce the opening of the clinic and these were handed out at the busy intersection along from the main gate of the campus. A second hand-out was produced recently with basic dog-care advice as well as details of the clinic. The official opening is planned for 23 July 2011 to coincide with the UP Mandela day outreach initiative.



It is believed that the MAHC will, over time, play an important veterinary and educational role in the lives of local pet owners and the greater community. Apart from the benefit to the animals themselves, it is hoped that many school children will be positively exposed to veterinary science through the MAHC, so that in the years to come, some may decide to enrol in the BVSc or Dip Vet Nurs programmes.

Please contact one of the following people if you would like to donate money, dog food, collars, leashes, baskets, or your time:

Sr Sarah Johnson	(012) 529 8387 / 079 183 1878	sarah.johnson@up.ac.za
Mr Jacques van Rooyen	(012) 529 8339 / 083 289 1312	jacques.vanrooyen@up.ac.za
Mr Eugene Machimana	(012) 529 8100 / 083 687 0181	eugene.machimana@up.ac.za

# Basic pet care education at Ratjiepan

*Cecilia Poggenpoel, Mariette van Aarde, Stefan Beukes, Andries Fourie & Andre van den Berg (BVSc I)*

On 25 May 2011, five students from Onderstepoort set out to change the lives of about 200 primary school children from Ratjiepan and Moeka Villages, but instead, they changed our lives. This is our story.



As part of our Veterinary Science studies, it is expected of us to participate in a community engagement project, where we can use our knowledge and skills to empower communities to alleviate problems and help us in our quest for animal welfare. We wanted to help primary school children acquire the basic knowledge and skills they will need to care for the animals in their community. We centred our talk on basic dog care.

Firstly we visited Ramoshe Primary School at Ratjiepan Village near the Production Animal Outreach Clinic, where we spoke to 80 Grade 6 learners. It was the first time our group presented in a rural community and we did not know what to expect, but the children jumped at the opportunity to help us with our interactive presentation. For some of them, it was their first exposure to animal welfare and a career in veterinary science and hopefully our visit will have a lasting impression.

We ended our day on a high note at Kogea Moeka Primary School at Moeka village, where we spoke to 160 Grade 5 learners. Again the interactive presentation got the job done and it was wonderful seeing the children learn through fun.

It is our wish that these children will take something positive from our time together and grow up to be valuable members of their respective communities. But at the end of the day, we might have been the ones who got the most out of it. They taught us what it means to be part of a caring community and talking to them about what we wish to one day accomplish as veterinarians, renewed our faith in our own dreams and its possibilities.

We would like to thank the principals, Ms Motsepe and Mr Maswanganyi, of Ramoshe Primary School and Kogea Moeka Primary School respectively, who welcomed us with open arms. Also Dr Dawie Blyghaut, the coordinator of the Production Animal outreach clinic at Ratjiepan. Special thanks to Eugene Machimana, without whom none of this would have been possible.

We had a great time, but we will stick to Veterinary Science for now, because as we found out the hard way; teaching is a horse of a different colour.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

***“A veterinarian is someone who does not eat meat.”***

A Grade 9 learner at a school in Mamelodi

# Cosmo City CVC

*Karen Loots (Cosmo City CVC Organiser)*



We had our monthly clinic at Cosmo City on 14 May 2011 from 14:00 – 16:30 and it was a huge success. We are growing more and more with every visit. With the help of all the friendly residents of the Cosmo community and their positive response towards our Clinic, we were able to treat almost 40+ pets and this number is constantly increasing!

Our lovely furry friend – Caesar, from the local church in Cosmo City, was smiling from ear to ear after Dr Chris removed a “crust” of hair that caused a bad infection on his lower back...Thank u so much for going the extra mile doctor!

Thank you to the community of Cosmo City for your warm welcome! We will continue with our Clinic once

a month, so please bring your pets for vaccinations, deworming, sterilisations and dips.

We are busy trying to raise funds towards building a much needed medical box, so that we can do more for the animals at the Clinic like treating common problems such as wounds and tick bite fever.

**For any donations of food, money towards our medical box, any doggy products or if you would like to get involved in our Clinic (we always need volunteers and doctors). Please contact Karen Loots on 072 482 5849/ 011 673 9894.**

**\* Our remaining Clinic dates for 2011 are as follows: 16 July, 13 August, 17 September, 15 October, 12 November and 10 December**

A special thanks to all our hard-working doctors: Drs Clare, Chris, Tiffany, Kate, Bronwyn as well as our volunteers Yolandi, Rozelle, Jasper, Maria and our newest member, Rushda Khan, who is in her third year at the Faculty of Veterinary Science. She's studying really hard and still makes time to help the community of Cosmo City and its animals... Thank you for your willingness to help animals, all your love, dedication and knowledge. You guys are a great team to work with and we all have the same goal and dream to control the number of unwanted animals through sterilization and to help the community and its animals one step at a time.

*\*We hope to see new faces at our next clinic!*

# Health and welfare of dogs and the community in Soshanguve

*Marianne Semmelink, Anel Malan, Carli Pretorius & Minette Pretorius (BVSc I)*

Sustainable biodiversity is central to the health and wellbeing of humans. A whole host of drivers, including the health and wellbeing of domesticated animals, have an influence. Veterinarians therefore address the needs of humans and domesticated animals holistically, in an integrated way to contribute to societies' needs. The convergence of people, animals and our environment has created a new dynamic in which the health of each group is inextricably interconnected. An integrated approach is required in terms of health; be it human, animal or plant health. This philosophy is internationally recognised as conservation medicine, and more recently 'one health'.

'One health' is particularly important in disadvantaged communities where people generally receive a lower income and can therefore not provide veterinary care to their pets. There is a lack of understanding that, by keeping the animals healthy, it promotes a general trend of better health for humans too. Many diseases are spread across species (zoonoses), therefore it is of the utmost importance to control diseases and external and internal parasites by any available means.

On 9 April 2011, four students from the Faculty of Veterinary Science along with Professor Herman Groenewald, Head of the Anatomy and Physiology Department, set off on a mission. The goal was quite simply to give back to the community of Soshanguve by providing essential services such as vaccinations, deworming and dipping of dogs in the area. This type of project encompasses all the aspects covered by the philosophy of 'one health'. The services we provided were free of charge due to the fact that ABSA had been so kind to grant a sponsorship which covered the cost of all the medication. Our initial goal was to vaccinate, deworm and dip 120 animals in the community. Our total medication was 120 doses of 5-in-1 vaccination, 120 doses of rabies vaccination, 120 deworming tablets and 250ml of dog dip. ABSA also provided promotional items to encourage people in the community to bring their dogs so that we could explain to them how important it is that their animals receive the right care.

We departed from Onderstepoort Campus at 7:30 and headed off to the college grounds (Tshwane Learning Centre) in Soshanguve to set up for what would prove to be a highly successful day. The pamphlet and posters we had used to advertise clearly said 9:00, but at 8:00

the first eager dog owner had already arrived to ensure that his beloved pets would be the first to receive our care. We set up our gazebos, advertising boards and the tubs we would use to dip the dogs. By 9:00 everything was ready and we vaccinated the first animals under the careful supervision of Prof Groenewald.



We vaccinated, dipped and administered deworming tablets to all the dogs we possibly could. We were also able to pass on our knowledge (however limited it may be) to the dog owners about the dipping and vaccination procedures. Prof Groenewald was always on hand to ensure that extra advice and hints were passed onto these owners. Through this process we learnt a great deal and would therefore like to thank Prof Groenewald for his contribution. The dog owners were really interested in all the procedures and many thanked us for the additional advice given as they had never realized how easy it was to prevent certain diseases.

By 13:30 we had run out of medication and had to turn a few people away as we could not accommodate them. The demand exceeded our expectations which will have to be taken into consideration for future projects. It was difficult to turn people away but this just makes us more determined than ever to return and repeat the project in the area allowing every dog owner the chance to protect their pets by vaccinating and dipping them. The financial constraints in these areas often do not allow dog owners the ability to protect their 'best friends', and by completing community projects like these we can make this luxury a possibility.

Despite a couple of hair-raising moments with a Rottweiler and the odd Pitbull the day turned out to be a great success and an achievement we can truly be proud of. We feel privileged to have been part of this project. This is definitely not the last project of its kind as we have already discussed with ABSA the possibility of it becoming a more regular feature in different townships. ABSA has already approved funding of a similar project in September that will allow us to give back once more.

# Penwarn kids camp 2011

*Simon Dommert (BVSc I)*

As part of the Companion Animal Ethology (CPE 400) course, our group was charged with engaging the community in some way and linking this to the outcomes of the CPE 400 learning outcomes. What this led to, was a fun-filled camp held from 30 April to 2 May 2011 for a group of children from the Bethel Assembly in Edendale, KwaZulu Natal. This will hopefully become an annual event on both Bethel's and Penwarn Country Club's calendars.

It all started when Pastor Zondi, of Bethel Assembly, approached Barbara Dommert, of Penwarn Country Club about the idea of a children's camp. What Penwarn lacked was the man-power to plan and run such an event in such a busy time of the year. This is where the ever enthusiastic Onderstepoort students came in.

The children of Bethel Assembly arrived on Saturday 20 April, after a 2½ hour trip. Knowing that they would be bursting with energy and apprehensive of the first time they'd been out into a farm environment, the first day's activities were meant to settle the kids and try voiding them of any excess energy. A variety of games such as volley ball and soccer were played all afternoon, right until the Southern Drakensberg late afternoon chill took over. That night we had our first real serious order of business. We spoke about the importance of the environment and how and why we must look after it. Then we spoke about animal health. And since young township children constitute the highest percentage of rabies fatalities, we were asked to talk to them about the risks, signs, and the "need-to-knows" of rabies.

The second day started with a hike up into the Penwarn hills to find a herd of Nguni cattle. Pastor Zondi had

specifically asked that we speak to the children about the heritage of the indigenous cattle to the African tribes and how they had been brought down South with them. We also spoke a little about their current cultural and agricultural values. After this, the kids were taken to an ancient bushman cave and were shown some amazing original bushman paintings and taught about the Southern Drakensberg's original inhabitants. From here, the children were driven to the dairy farm next door: Waterford. The children got to see all the aspects of a dairy farm, as well as some sheep, pigs and chickens. Waterford's dairy staff very kindly taught the children how to milk the cattle and let them each have a try.



Monday was set aside for packing up and getting ready for the long trip home. The weekend was a great success and much enjoyed by everyone. Next year, the camp can hopefully be held again and improved on. Now a base has been set to build upon.

I would like very much to thank the people and parents from Bethel Assembly and all their children; the kind staff of Penwarn Country Club that donated so much time, effort and money to the event; and lastly to my friends Matthew Weston and Jonathan Roberts who put in so much effort.

# Community Engagement Project 2011

*Nicci Wright (Senior Animal Manager, FreeMe Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre)*

We were delighted to receive an email from a group of Veterinary students earlier this year requesting that we facilitate their Community Engagement Project at FreeMe Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre. We like to encourage this type of interaction for three main reasons – wildlife rehabilitation, people and education!

Most of our cases spend as little time as possible in enclosures at our facility. Some are placed directly into soft-release enclosures on the reserves/conservancies which will facilitate their release process. However, one particular species, the Meerkat (*Suricata suricatta*), stays with us the longest. These animals are the direct result of the illegal pet trade where up to R2000 is handed over for an unweaned pup. Often no or little dietary information is offered and animals end up with physical deficiencies such as metabolic bone disease. Worse is the psychological turmoil caused by social isolation, misunderstood requirements and inadequate stimulation, which can result in self-mutilation. At adolescence, they'll begin marking territory continually with a pungent anal gland and they are driven to dig. In a suburban house, this is smelly and destructive ... and then they start biting in their quest to establish themselves as the alpha in their social group of humans and domestic pets! Usually, meerkats begin biting the least dominant person in the family, a child, and continue this trend until the alpha person is reached! In the meerkat social hierarchy this is normal and acceptable, but the human family can't understand why their sweet "Timone" has turned nasty! This is when we get the phone call ...

We carefully introduce suricates to one another to form viable groups which will be cohesive and functioning well enough to be released. One of their main needs during this process is stimulation to prevent boredom and stereotypical behaviour. When we were asked what the veterinary students could contribute, my immediate thought was cage enrichment and a programme of stimulation. To do this, the students had to study the species and their requirements in captivity and research various ways to keep these busy animals busier. Many creative ideas were put forward, all of them well thought out and planned.

The students spent a day implementing their project. We watched while digging boxes were constructed and filled with sand, tunnels were buried, and glitter balls hung. The meerkats were going to love this! A group of three meerkats were given the privilege of exploring the first new cage and it has certainly kept them busy. A favourite feature is the digging box, because the enclosures have a buried mesh floor to prevent escapes - but this prevents deep digging too. They've also loved digging up grasses and other plants while examining and smelling every part of them. Imagine the information they're gleaned through their sense of smell, all so stimulating!

These animals will be with us until December/January when rain has fallen in the desert reserve, providing good prey availability. The stimulation they receive during the rehabilitation process kick-starts the instincts which will make or break their survival. Projects such as the one carried out by BVSc I students Andrea Thiele, Anra Strauss, Alicia Chow and Chantal Jaca support the process by offering the meerkats varying textures, visual and tactile stimuli and the general excitement of 'new stuff' to explore. The students offered a knowledgeable programme which had been researched carefully and was well organised. In fact, we were impressed by their creative ingenuity, eg the hanging feathers to stimulate awareness of raptors!

Finally, an important part of a professionally operated wildlife rehabilitation facility is good working relationships with veterinarians. This ensures optimum care for our cases and creates opportunities for information sharing, allowing us all to expand our views. Hopefully the veterinary students who've worked at FreeMe Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre have gained an insight into this aspect of animal care with its many complexities. They'll be able to educate their peers and future clients against keeping any wildlife as pets, and perhaps one day they'll support a wildlife rehabilitation centre such as ours. The Community Engagement Project has added a new dimension to our facility and we are grateful for all the hard work done – and so are the meerkats! Thank you all!

# I WANT TO BE A VET

## **Sean Miller (Chairperson of the Onderstepoort Veterinary and Para-veterinary Student Council)**

In 2010, the Onderstepoort Para-Veterinary and Veterinary Student Council (OPVSC) began the "I want to be a vet" initiative to encourage previously disadvantaged school learners to have an interest in veterinary science and to assist them with their applications to our Faculty. The 2011 OPVSC wanted to continue these efforts by holding the second "I want to be a vet" initiative. On the weekend of 15 to 17 April 2011, the OPVSC hosted 32 school learners from all over the country at Onderstepoort. Learners were selected from schools in disadvantaged communities in all nine provinces. Those studying biological sciences were invited to spend the weekend with us at the Onderstepoort Campus of the University of Pretoria learning about veterinary science.

The learners travelled from all over the country, many on their first journey away from home, and attended the opening evening of the weekend with the OPVSC, members of the SRC, Faculty staff and the event sponsors. Learners were addressed by the Dean of the Veterinary Faculty, Prof Swan; the South African Veterinary Association Vice-President, Dr Riaan Du Preez; and the South African Veterinary Council Vice-President, Dr Anne de Vos who introduced the students to the different aspects of veterinary science and how veterinarians play an important role in society. Sponsors of the event also present on the night were Hill's Pet South Africa, represented by Sr Dalene Jansen Van Vuuren; Dr Cliff Meyer of the Honeydew Animal Clinic, Quintin Botha; and Helgard Cronje representing the SRC. Without the generous contributions of these sponsors, this event would not have been possible.

On Saturday morning the learners donned their "greens and gumboots" for the first time to embark on a busy Onderstepoort day, starting with a tour of the Academic Hospital. The students were then introduced to the Anatomy Department, where they watched and participated in a dissection and got to see some interesting comparative specimens including cheetah, lion, rhino and various animal skeletons. After tea, the learners had their first animal handling practical where they got to participate in cattle casting which was followed by a sheep-handling practical. Unfortunately, due to rain, the learners were denied their horse-riding adventure but were still introduced to some of Onderstepoort's Nooitgedacht horses and taught how to approach, groom and care for them. The Onderstepoort pigs also made a name for themselves by hunting for food in the

learners' gumboots while the learners were taught more animal husbandry skills and the practical implications of pig farming. On Saturday afternoon, Dr Quixi Sonntag led the dog handling and behaviour session with the learners and some of our cutest Onderstepoort Teaching Animal Unit beagle puppies. They had them sitting and leopard crawling in no time.



The learners thoroughly enjoyed their time at Onderstepoort, learning about and handling animals that some of them had never seen before. Thank you to all the staff, students and sponsors that made this event possible. It is our hope that these learners will become tomorrow's young vets. Below are some of their comments.

*"The weekend was very much encouraging especially the dog part. What I learned was that animals are like us human beings, they need to be respected and they deserve our love. The 'I want to be a vet weekend' really helped me because now I know my standpoint. I would like to thank the 'I want to be a vet' committee to keep on doing the good work."* Clifford Malapane

*"Being here has made me realise the wide range of fields which are related to veterinary science which was one thing I wasn't aware of before I came here. This weekend has inspired me to become a vet as my love and passion for animals was raised to another level. I must admit that after this weekend I have no doubt that I want to be a vet one day!"* Khutjo Konyana

*"This was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I am glad I didn't miss. When I came here I just wanted to know more about veterinary science and well, had it as my second option but after this weekend it definitely is my first choice and I am not backing off. The video, the dissection and animal handlings really fascinated me and I just can't wait for my first year. To our sponsors and the people who made this weekend a reality, I would like to say thanks, you guys made a difference in my life and I'm sure it's not only my life!"* Noko Mpati

The Department of Community Engagement will offer a UP Priority Course in 2011. Please be on the lookout and register for the next intake. The contact person is Ms Wendy Carvalho-Malekane Tel: (012) 420-3777 Email: [wendy.carvalho-malekane@up.ac.za](mailto:wendy.carvalho-malekane@up.ac.za)

Visit the UP Community Engagement website regularly for updates about projects and funding opportunities.