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# OP News

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Dr Jan Myburgh, member of the Faculty's Exotic Leather Research Centre and Chair in Crocodile Health and Welfare (centre), demonstrates a procedure to some of the attendees at the Crocodile Specialist Group Working Meeting.

## Crocodile Specialist Group puts OP on the world map

"A huge success for the University of Pretoria and the Faculty of Veterinary Science and judged as one of the best Crocodile Specialist Group (CSG) working meetings held thus far".

This is how the Director of the Faculty's Exotic Leather Research Centre (ELRC), Prof Gerry Swan, described the 24th working meeting of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) CSG.

The meeting was held in Skukuza at the end of May 2016.

More than 340 delegates from 42 countries attended this prestigious event of the IUCN/Species Survival Commission (SSC)/CSG, which returned to South Africa after 43 years, with the second working meeting having been held at Ndumu Game Reserve in 1973. The theme for this year's event was 'Crocodiles, communities and livelihoods', which highlighted the complex relationship between Africa's top aquatic

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## New Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning appointed in the Faculty of Veterinary Science

Prof Dietmar Holm was raised in Hartbeespoort and qualified as a veterinarian at the University of Pretoria in 1998. After five years in private practice, he returned to Onderstepoort in 2003 for an academic career in Production Animal Medicine, first as a clinical assistant, progressing through the ranks to associate professor in 2013. He obtained his master's degree in veterinary science cum laude in 2006, followed by a PhD in 2014, and subsequently registered as a veterinary specialist in bovine herd health with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC). He was awarded full academic colours by the University of Pretoria in 2006 and

2014. He received a Laureate Award for Education Innovation in 2008.

"When my career as mixed-practice veterinarian started, the last thing I imagined was to be honoured with the appointment of Deputy Dean for Teaching and Learning some 18 years later, an appointment that gives me the opportunity to make a contribution that will hopefully last much longer than the appointment itself. As veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals from the wide scope of our professions, we have one thing in common: a passion for animals. As educators and academics, we also have a common goal to leave something behind that will have a



Prof Dietmar Holm is the new Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty. He was appointed with effect from 1 June 2016.

positive effect on people to follow. We sometimes differ in our opinions on how to achieve the best for our animals, professions and country, but we must guard against letting these differences prevent us from achieving our common goals. Teaching and learning remains at the core of the business of the University of Pretoria, and achieving better veterinary teaching and learning at our Faculty will be my primary focus for the next few years. I thank the Faculty and professions for the vote of confidence,

and trust that I will be able to count on further support in reaching our goals," Prof Holm said after his appointment.

Prof Holm has served as moderator, examiner and examination officer for the SAVC's registration examinations for veterinarians with foreign qualifications, and played a major role in the development of the 2016 BVSc curriculum. He is the immediate past-president of and serves as financial director on the board of directors of the Ruminant Veterinary Association of

South Africa, is a member of the South African Veterinary Association and the South African Veterinary Semen and Embryo Group. He serves on the technical committee of the Nguni project of the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development.

Prof Holm has supervised a number of master's and doctoral degree candidates, published in peer-reviewed journals and presented numerous papers at local and international congresses.

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Photo: Prof Gerry Swan

predator, the Nile crocodile, and the communities who often share the same scarce aquatic resources with these ancient reptiles.

Besides being a scientific congress, this event also hosted a trade expo for the first time. Producers and various service providers to the exotic leather trade profiled products and services.

According to Prof Swan, this expo, to which the ELRC contributed extensively, was of an exceptional standard. More than 21 businesses took the opportunity to profile their products and services to international delegates. The last day of the congress was a highlight, which was dedicated to 'trading'. The Honourable Minister of Trade and Industry, Dr Rob Davies, delivered the keynote address.

This event also served to provide the platform for the launch of Exotic Leather South Africa (ELSA) as one of the cluster initiatives funded by the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti). Even more important was the fact that the newly formed South African Crocodile Industry Association (SACIA) also held its first annual general meeting, and



Mpho Ramoshaba (the dti), Dr Rob Davies (Minister of Trade and Industry), Stefan van As (Le Croc and Chairman of ELSA) and Robert Schäfer (Cape Cobra and ELSA) at the expo during the CSG working meeting.

the Faculty's ELRC was able to present itself to a wide international audience.

In his keynote address, Minister Davies appreciated the theme of the CSG meeting, 'Crocodiles, communities and livelihoods', as well as its importance in creating economic opportunities based on conservation. "I commend the work done by the University of Pretoria, ELSA and the SACIA in cooperating to compete and exhibit the capacity of the South African leather value chain at this event," the Minister said.

Among other Board members and manufacturers, Minister Davies specifically acknowledged the efforts and work of Prof Swan and Dr Jan Myburgh, a member of the ELRC and Chair in Crocodile Health and Welfare at the Faculty.

According to Prof Swan, the ELRC, together with its partners, received exceptional international acclaim and exposure during this event. "The Exotic Leather Cluster model, together with the institutional partnership with the University of Pretoria and its mission and goals, as well as the research already performed, was acknowledged as a unique and exemplary model for the crocodile industry globally. This has immediately placed the ELRC on the world stage," Prof Swan said.

**Note:** An amount of R95 500 raised at the charity auction at this event has been earmarked to further assist crocodile scientists in addressing the Olifant River Project in the Kruger National Park.



# Message from the Dean

## Prof Darrell Abernethy

I recently attended three very different events that provided interesting insights as to the place and role of our Faculty – both nationally and internationally. Allow me to recount them – all firsts for me.

In June, I attended the OIE biennial veterinary deans' conference in Bangkok, Thailand. The theme was veterinary education and some of the top veterinary schools presented on new developments and cutting-edge techniques in veterinary education. It was gratifying to note that very little was presented that we, as a Faculty, are not already doing and, in some cases, are leading the field – in blended learning, clinical training and use of online technologies. But it was clear we are not well known – people know of the brand "Onderstepoort", but know little of our Faculty, the quality of our programmes or the work we do. International reputation and exposure are essential to attract overseas funding and we are thus embarking on an explicit marketing drive to advertise our

work and school. In July, I met with ten deans from the southern and eastern parts of Africa for our annual meeting, also coordinated by the OIE (the World Organisation for Animal Health). It was challenging to hear how some are striving to produce able graduates with little funding from their governments. I was grateful to realise the investment that the University of Pretoria and government make in our Faculty to ensure that we continue to produce high-quality veterinarians. I was also struck, though, not only with the role that we as a school can play in Africa in supporting our regional schools, but also by the need to ensure that we provide a return on the investment that government has made in us. Given the severe financial pressures facing the tertiary education sector, we need to

attract external income and ensure we are relevant and excellent. The third event happened in August, just outside Pretoria. We used external funding to take all out first-year students for a weekend at a game lodge in Dinokeng Game Reserve. The lodge had a structured programme of group-based training events, designed to challenge the students' stereotypes and attitudes, and help them get to know each other better. The event was inspiring and rewarding; one student leader summarised it well: "This class will never be the same again!" Seeing such a diverse class – across race, gender and age – made me realise the responsibility we have as a Faculty in forming the next generation of the profession, who are not only technically skilled, but cohesive, diverse and motivated to work together.

## Faculty Day showcases high-level research outputs

The annual Faculty Day was once again one of the highlights on the Faculty's calendar.

Not only did it provide the opportunity to showcase high-level research outputs, but it also gave researchers the chance to share their research with peers, colleagues and students. Veterinary pharmaceutical companies displayed and exhibited their products and services, while this year's Arnold Theiler Memorial Lecture, entitled "One Health: a decade of shared experiences and benefits", was presented by Prof Lucille Blumberg, Director of the



Some of the poster presentations during Faculty Day.

National Institute for Communicable Diseases of the National Health Laboratory of South Africa.

The Dean of the Faculty, Prof Darrell Abernethy, delivered the welcoming address. He emphasised that the Faculty should align itself to advances in technology and ever-changing global and local environments.

With this in mind, the Faculty needs to excel in its research focus areas, increase local and international collaboration, attend more conferences, as well as increase citations and research publications. The Faculty's research must also be relevant to the needs of the country and Africa.

Prof Abernethy stressed continued engagement with government to address certain identified needs, particularly issues such as food security, poverty alleviation and antimicrobial resistance.

While One Health is an essential research focus area in the Faculty's strategic plan, Prof Blumberg's presentation focused on the veterinary profession. She emphasised combined projects that have been initiated to look at the prevalence of zoonoses in potentially exposed humans at the animal and human health interface. As an active practitioner of One Health, Prof Blumberg has worked closely with animal practitioners in outbreak and case prevention, as well as the management of avian influenza, Rift Valley fever, rabies and the Zika virus. She has also played an important role in the investigation of cases of acute febrile illness for zoonotic diseases.

The quality of the oral presentations on the day was of a high standard. A different system for oral presentations was already introduced in 2015. The best 10 oral presentations are chosen from the departments and these presentations are then presented during Faculty Day. The presentations covered different disciplines in the field of veterinary science and ranged from research projects on companion animals, production animals and wildlife, to work in the fields of phytochemicals and vaccine-related studies.



Dr Clint Austin (left) of Bayer hands Dr Elise van der Heijden of the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases her prize as the winner of the best oral presentation during Faculty Day 2016.

A further 32 poster presentations were part of the third session. The posters showcased a wide variety of research focuses. These focuses include poultry, production animal studies, wildlife management and prevention of diseases, including zoonosis, companion animal clinical studies, anatomical and physiological studies, and veterinary tropical disease areas of research.

The formal part of the day was concluded with the customary annual Faculty Day awards. The 2016 winners were as follows:

- **Researcher of the Year** – Prof Estelle Venter (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases)
- **Best oral presentation** – Dr Elise van der Heijden (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases)
- **Best poster presentation** – Dr Gareth Zeiler (Department of Paraclinical Sciences)
- The nine other best researchers were Prof Peter Thompson, Prof Geoff Fosgate, Prof Johan Schoeman, Prof Vinny Naidoo, Prof Anita Michel, Prof Andre Ganswindt, Prof Christo Botha, Prof Amelia Goddard and Prof Dayo Fasina.



Prof Lucille Blumberg, Deputy Director of the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) and head of the NICD's Public Health Surveillance and Response Division, receives the annual Lectori Salutem from the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Darrell Abernethy, after she delivered the Sir Arnold Theiler Memorial Lecture during Faculty Day 2016.



## Veterinary faculty's VGL RhODIS® workshop in South Africa leads to agreement by experts to enhanced international DNA testing of rhinos

The Faculty of Veterinary Science's Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) was instrumental in the recent announcement of the international expansion of rhino horn DNA testing at the RhODIS® Rhino DNA Scientific Workshop that took place in the Kruger National Park and at the University of Pretoria's Onderstepoort Campus in South Africa.

According to Dr Cindy Harper, Director of the VGL, a major output of the meeting was that it detailed the requirements of a simplified method to facilitate the sharing and roll-out of an improved RhODIS® compatible analysis system to laboratories across the world that can become the international standard capable of producing comparable DNA profiles, which can be loaded onto a global database.

"While the RhODIS® system is already a proven tool for the investigation of rhino poaching cases and has been used in a number of prosecutions, the refinement and roll-out of a recognised international forensic rhino DNA

standard should support enforcement action and the investigation of trade routes on an international scale," Dr Harper said.

The workshop, which was funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), through the Wildlife-Trafficking, Response, Assessment, Priority Setting (TRAPS) Project and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) African Rhino Programme, brought together wildlife DNA forensic scientists, enforcement officers and investigators from source, transit and consumer countries. Various branches of the South African Police Service and the country's Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) were represented.

Since the rhino poaching upsurge started in 2008, over 5 000 rhinos have been poached. "The reach of transnational organised criminals behind poaching has extended to all major rhino range states, and will undermine rhino conservation successes and threaten both African rhino species if increasing poaching levels cannot be brought under control," said Dr Richard Emslie from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) African Rhino Specialist Group.

The workshop, organised by the VGL, TRAFFIC, WWF and Tools and Resources for Applied Conservation and Enforcement (TRACE)

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**Editor:**  
Chris van Blerk  
Email: [chris.vanblerk@up.ac.za](mailto:chris.vanblerk@up.ac.za)

**Consulting editor:**  
Janine Smit  
Email: [janine@jses.co.za](mailto:janine@jses.co.za)

**Layout:**  
Janine Smit Editorial Services  
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Wildlife Forensics Network, took scientists and enforcement officers to a rhino crime scene in the Kruger National Park, allowing them to see two poached rhinos whose horns had been savagely hacked off with an axe. With the Park losing about two rhinos a day to poaching, both black and white rhino populations in the Park appear to have declined.

Scientists from South Africa, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Kenya, Botswana, Namibia, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia, the Czech Republic, and India participated in DNA sample collection training at the crime scene, using the specific forensic sample kits developed for RhODIS®. “This really brings home the reality of the rhino horn trade,” said Dr Jeffrine Rovie from the National Wildlife Forensic Laboratory in Malaysia.

Delegates also saw the eRhODIS® data collection application demonstrated, and versions of these apps could be developed in other languages in future.

Workshop delegates and all African rhino range states support the development and use of a single standardised and compatible forensic rhino DNA system globally. RhODIS® can also already determine species of African rhino from recovered horn, and the meeting recognised the need to develop it further in the hope that it can also be used to distinguish between the species of Asian rhino.

Dr Joseph Okori, leader of the WWF’s African Rhino Programme, noted the critical role played by the global forensic community in combating rhino crime and that DNA analysis is starting to help improve knowledge of trade routes and inform rhino management.

Nick Ahlers, manager of the Wildlife-TRAPS Project for TRAFFIC and the IUCN, said “another aim of this workshop was to build relationships between scientists from prominent countries in the illegal rhino horn trade. We have certainly achieved this with positive feedback from range, transit and consumer countries that have participated this week”.



RhODIS® training in the Kruger National Park.

“Rhino poaching not only threatens to wipe out these iconic species, but is also devastating local communities through associated criminality, violence and theft. DNA forensics is a critical tool in the fight against wildlife crime, and the outcomes of this workshop are likely to have impacts beyond rhinos to other species involved in the illegal wildlife trade,” said Dr Sara Carlson, a biodiversity and natural resources specialist at USAID.

## Research on rhino rehabilitation

**Little is known on how these animals cope during the rehabilitation process or how well they adapt once released into the wild.**

Rearing conditions, particularly mother deprivation, can have profound effects later in the life of an animal, potentially affecting their ability to survive, interact with other animals of their own species, breed or raise their offspring to the age of independence.

Through scientific research, it is possible to analyse which aspects of these conditions influence the welfare and behaviour of the animals. This information can be used to adapt rehabilitation programmes accordingly to maximise their success. If successful, rehabilitated orphaned rhinos could form their own healthy wild sustainable groups or could be reintroduced into

wild populations to further help with conservation programmes.

The Department of Paraclinical Sciences, in collaboration with SANParks, Care for Wild, Kaapse Valley Conservancy and Mpumalanga Parks, has initiated a research project to determine how rearing conditions and environment during rehabilitation affect the subsequent adaptation of orphaned rhinos once they are released into the wild. The principal investigator on this project is Dr María Fàbregas, who is a behavioural ecologist and postdoctoral fellow in the Department. She will be supervised by Prof Leith Meyer and



Dr María Fàbregas with some of the rhino orphans in the background.

Prof Henk Bertschinger. Numerous other experts in the fields of wildlife veterinary science, epidemiology, endocrinology, ecology and reproduction will be involved. The team will use physical, physiological and behavioural indicators to assess the welfare of the rhino calves during rehabilitation and will explore how these animals cope once they are returned to their natural habitat. This study is generously funded by Epi-Use’s company GroupElephant.com.

# GOING BACK IN HISTORY

Sometimes one comes across a story that tells a tale of hope, determination and success. However, when one reads an honest account such as this one, which also contains hardship, embarrassment and even humiliation, it inspires one even more. André Hess was the first person to graduate as a veterinarian from the Faculty of Veterinary Science as a so-called "non-white" person in 1985. Being part of this Faculty during a sad era in the history of South Africa, Dr Hess tells his story.

When asked what it felt like to be "The First", the expected answer is usually one framed as some kind of personal and racial achievement and triumph. However, I felt none of this at the time of graduation. When I spend any time with that thought now, it feels awkward, because feeling triumphant would concede too much about "my race" (such a loaded concept, and one that is inseparable from feeling ashamed of oneself). This, in turn, would sanctify racial history and racial expectations. I feel that it was no achievement other than personal.

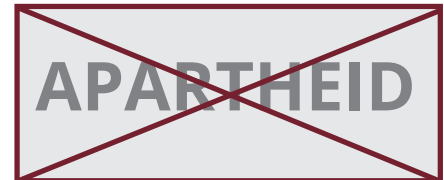
Apart from having all the "A's" from school and a good portfolio of work experience with animals, my selection to Onderstepoort was conditional on the following things: that I socialise only in my own area of residence (in other words, with other "coloured" people in townships), that I have a permit to attend a white university (which meant living so far away that I had to board taxis at 05:30 to get to classes on time and return after 20:00 at night) and that it was against the rules for me to attend student social events. During the selection period, a single bus driver complained about a "kleurling" on board and a chauffeur was employed to drive me after that. There was also the constant "*Hou Tuks blank!*" (*Keep Tuks white!*), said to my face and painted on campus, and aggressive stares from hundreds of students at a time.

But none of this mattered at that particular moment, because I was going to be a practising small animal veterinarian. Something impossible had happened to me. I was a coloured boy from the dusty Cape Flats, who had not been further away from home than Beaufort West, and I was going to Onderstepoort.

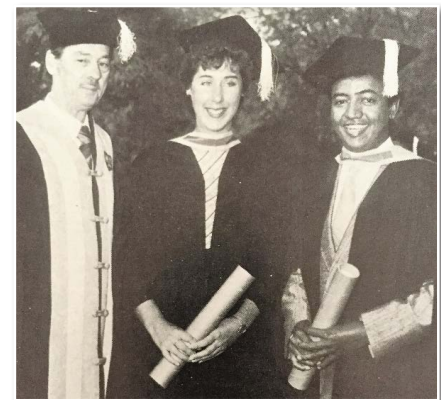
My journey had already started at the age of 14, when I worked for the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) in the time of Superintendent Norman Wilkie, Dr Asher Teper and Dr Kate Harris. I had become a whizz at things like consultations, handling animals, IVs and suturing, and this was beneficial when we got to outpatients and surgery in our intern year. However, as a mere matriculant, I was politically naïve and had not even had a conversation with a white person until my classes started at the University of Pretoria.

When I arrived at Onderstepoort, it felt to me like I was trespassing. This feeling was subtly and openly both reinforced and undermined on a daily basis and I cannot remember feeling confident about anything at any time because of the atmosphere I carried about me, imagined or not. At the time, UP did nothing to help me. I was their experiment and I did not think it was my place to ask (itself a symptom of the feeling of inferiority apartheid engendered in me despite my achievement). Many years later, I encountered the then Head of the Student Service Bureau. He said that he had waited in his office for me to approach him and that he was sorry for not making a greater effort to approach me. He said I came across as independent and that he felt a little nervous about talking to me.

What made a difference to me was the effort of individuals. It started with me being seated next to Prof Darrell Abernethy, now Dean of the Faculty, on the flight from Cape Town. He talked to me like I was one of "them". In the first months of classes, I was dumbstruck and not inclined to talk to people. I looked down at my feet



Dr André Hess in his practice with one of his patients.



Graduation day in 1985. Dr Hess with Prof Le Roux and his daughter, Dr Marina le Roux.

and at my work, afraid to engage. Some people began to talk to me, for which I was so grateful. The first person to come up to me in class was Andrew Fowler and he was followed by a handful of people, who were largely Afrikaans, many of whom I have remained friends with to this day. I am godfather to Jane Doherty's son, the late Shirley Yeates stayed

by my side throughout my time at Onderstepoort and held my hand as our final results were announced. I have a deep friendship with Karen du Plooy, who miraculously made filter coffee for us on the lawns outside her residence because I was not allowed through the door.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that some of our lecturers and administrative staff risked the ire of their colleagues and others by reaching out to me. Among them are Prof Malie Smuts, who has remained a friend, the late Prof Le Roux, whom I discovered was instrumental in my selection to Onderstepoort (his daughter, Marina, was in our year), and Prof Van der Walt, who set me up in a research institute in Switzerland after graduation. I must also mention a Mr Koekemoer (my memory on his position is vague), who went against his own admin staff when I went to ask why I did not receive a Physics prize, despite my good results. A lady shouted at me across the counter: "*omdat jy nie n f\*\*\*n burger is nie!*" (because you are not a f\*\*\*g citizen!). He stood nearby and called me into his office where he more-or-less handed me the Boeringer Ingelheim Bursary (which was much larger than the Physics prize, and was granted annually for the rest of the course). Because I had no money of my own, this changed my life.

In my final year, I received the Swiss Federal Prize to study in Switzerland. There, I worked within a larger research programme on the enterotoxins of *Staphylococcus Aureus* in the raw milk and raw milk cheeses of Switzerland and its phage types. I completed a postgraduate degree and

discovered how my student life should have been.

Upon my return to Cape Town, I received a call from Roy and Kathy Aronson to do a locum job for them. This was in Sea Point and I worked completely on my own. It was my first job as a practising veterinarian. Thereafter, I worked at St Francis Veterinary Surgeons for five and a half very happy years. I reckon I have paid my professional dues to South Africa, if any dues were due.

In the weeks after Nelson Mandela was released from prison, I was head-hunted by Medivet in London. I was there on that epochal day in the Parade in Cape Town for his speech, with my dear friend Carin Smuts of CS Studio Architects and niece of Prof Malie Smuts). I accepted the job offer because I was drawn to Europe, and ended up staying there for three years. Too tired to look for a better job, a position was pointed out to me by an equally exhausted colleague and I applied. I got the job in the beautiful cathedral city of St Albans just north of London and I have been there ever since. The practice became mine a long time ago (I have spent the past 22 years in the same practice). I called it Animalism Veterinary Surgeons when I took over and it is the oldest small animal practice in the UK. It was established as an equine practice in 1873 and became a small animal practice between the two world wars. A railway connection was put in specifically to deliver horses to the practice. This line still functions, but now carries commuters. I employ two veterinary surgeons and seven other staff. I live just four minutes from work,

which is almost like working from home.

These days, apart from work, my time is taken up with the things that enable a more-or-less perfect work-life balance. John Higgins, a full-time potter, and I have lived in the same house for almost 25 years and have eight terriers now (who have succeeded several other dogs, including spaniels and lurchers). I am Chairman of the Norfolk Terrier Club of Great Britain, Breed Health Coordinator (a Kennel Club committee), a dog show manager, and I write regularly for dog magazines and newspapers. In a recent exhibition catalogue, I was described as a "terrier man". I am happy with that. I also have a first-class honours degree in art history and I write for several art journals and museums in the UK and on the continent (most recently for an exhibition at the Museum of Barcelona). I have a parallel career in ceramics. As a professional ceramicist, I am a Fellow of the Craft Potters Association. I have amassed many international awards, including two World Award of Honours in Korea and an Altech Altron Award for Sculpture in South Africa. I started collecting modern art when I got my first salary and now hire storage space for my pieces.

I also write fiction. I am a Faber alumnus and well into my second novel. I have been long-listed on several international competitions and I can see myself doing these things for the rest of my life.



Andre's dogs – all eight of them.



This ceramic panel was commissioned from and donated by André for the opening of the new Faculty building at the Onderstepoort Campus.



## Prof Ivan Horak honoured with the highest award of the South African Academy for Science and Arts

Prof Ivan Horak, emeritus professor from the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, was recently selected by the South African Academy for Science and Arts to receive the MT Steyn Medal for exceptional achievement in natural sciences or technology. The MT Steyn Medal is the highest award the Academy can bestow on natural scientists and it recognises the recipient's cumulative life work.

At 82, Prof Horak, a world expert on ticks and parasites, is still active at the Faculty of Veterinary Science. He has made a substantial contribution to the study of ticks. His studies are not only academically valuable, but form the basis of many interventions that have benefited the production animal and wildlife industries in Africa.

He has trained many students, attained wide international recognition, as well as identified and described 12 new parasite species. Other scientists have named four newly discovered species in his honour. Prof Horak has contributed to more than 300 scientific publications and he has been awarded several national and international prizes, including the Gold Medal of the South African Veterinary Association, a Leading Minds Award by the University of Pretoria and the Theiler Memorial Trust Award for Excellence in the Field of Veterinary Science.

His research interests include the taxonomy and biology of the Hyalomma tick species (bont-legged

ticks) and ticks that parasitise rhinos in eastern and southern Africa, small mammals, horses, donkeys and tortoises in South Africa.

Prof Horak obtained a PhD for a dissertation on conical flukes at the University of Pretoria. This was followed by a PhD on endoparasites from the University of Natal, a DVSc, based on publications on endo- and ectoparasites from the University of Pretoria and a DSc based on publications on ticks from the University of the Free State.

The criteria for nomination as a recipient of the medal include a creative contribution to the discovery, organisation and continued expansion of natural sciences and significant contributions to the development of South Africa through the continued application thereof.

Prof Horak is the fourth member of staff of the Faculty to be awarded this prize, after Prof Dieter Osterhoff in 1996, Dr Daan Verwoerd in 2004 and Prof Kobus Eloff in 2015.



Prof Hans Coetzee

### Faculty alumnus Head of Department at university in the **USA**

Prof Hans Coetzee was recently named as the new Head of the Department of Anatomy and Physiology at the Kansas State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

"I am humbled to join a department where there are many talented faculty members who do outstanding work teaching foundational skills to the next generation of veterinarians," Prof Coetzee said. "Researchers here are also focused on solving some of the world's most complex biomedical challenges at a time when the competition for funding has never been more intense. I look forward to working with the Faculty to identify new opportunities to better meet the needs of our veterinary students and to expand our research portfolio," he added.

Prof Coetzee earned a Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) degree at the University of Pretoria in 1996. He earned a doctorate in veterinary microbiology from Iowa State University in 2005. He became Board certified as a diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Clinical Pharmacology in 2006, and as a diplomate of the American College of Animal Welfare in 2014. He also earned a certificate in cattle health and production from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in London in 2000, and is a European specialist in animal welfare science, ethics and law.

– Bovine Vet Online



Prof Ivan Horak (centre) together with Prof Wessel Pienaar, Chairperson of the South African Academy for Science and Arts (left), and Prof Kobus Eloff after Prof Horak was awarded the MT Steyn Medal.

## Faculty hosts BVSc Graduate Day One Skills Assessment Workshop

A skills assessment workshop was recently presented at the Faculty of Veterinary Science to define the Day One Skills of a BVSc graduate and how to assess these skills. The workshop was attended by 20 academics who are involved with assessing final-year BVSc students.

Prof Dietmar Holm, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning, was the programme master. Prof Darrell Abernethy, Dean of the Faculty, also attended. Prof Dianne Manning, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Health Sciences, presented a session entitled “The journey to achieving Day One competencies and their assessment in the Faculty of Health Sciences”.

This was followed by a presentation on the “Basics of assessment” by Dr El-Marie Mostert, Education Consultant in the Faculty. Among other things, the principles of assessment and the use of online objective assessment were addressed. Dr Annett Annandale, Manager of the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory, followed with skills assessment and practical assessment using objective structured clinical examinations, directly observed practical skills, a mini clinical evaluation exercise and the possibilities of administering these assessments in the

Skills Laboratory. Dr Henry Annandale's presentation was entitled “Skills and procedures exposure by the class of 2016”. It refers to the use of Vetbox for the final-year students' practical rotations.

After lunch, a decision was taken to continually re-examine and refine the skills list.



Among others, the skills assessment workshop was attended by Prof Dianne Manning, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning in the Faculty of Health Sciences (front left), Prof Darrell Abernethy, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science (centre), Dr Annett Annandale, Manager of the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory (front right), Dr El-Marie Mostert, Education Consultant in the Faculty (back left), and Prof Dietmar Holm, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning of the Faculty (back right).

## Advanced Course in Wildlife Chemical Immobilisation and Field Practice



In November 2015, the Department of Paraclinical Sciences, in collaboration with CE at UP and SANParks, hosted the second Advanced Course in Wildlife Chemical Immobilisation and Field Practice at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park. The objective of this course is to enhance the knowledge and skills of wildlife veterinarians. The course consists of a mixture of lectures and practical sessions designed to integrate and advance knowledge at a specialist level. The course is growing in popularity and will now be held annually. Most of the delegates are local, but as the course grows in popularity, it is attracting regional and international veterinarians involved in wildlife veterinary work. The course is of great benefit to the Faculty, as it not only promotes the Faculty as a regional leader in wildlife veterinary science, but also serves as a breeding ground for research collaborations and ideas. In addition, it provides the lecturers involved with a great opportunity to interact with colleagues and learn from their day-to-day experiences.

### Did you know?

**Rhinos would give Usain Bolt a run for his money:** Over a 100-metre sprint, humans max out at about 48 km/h. Rhinos, on the other hand, have been clocked at about 50 to 56 km/h and only run on their toes. This is despite the fact that they are the size of an SUV.

# Onderstepoort gets its own community choir

A campus as unique as Onderstepoort needs a distinctive voice.

Those who have ever been part of a choir know that singing together is about a lot more than practising notes. The effect is far-reaching, the potential enormous, and the therapy priceless.

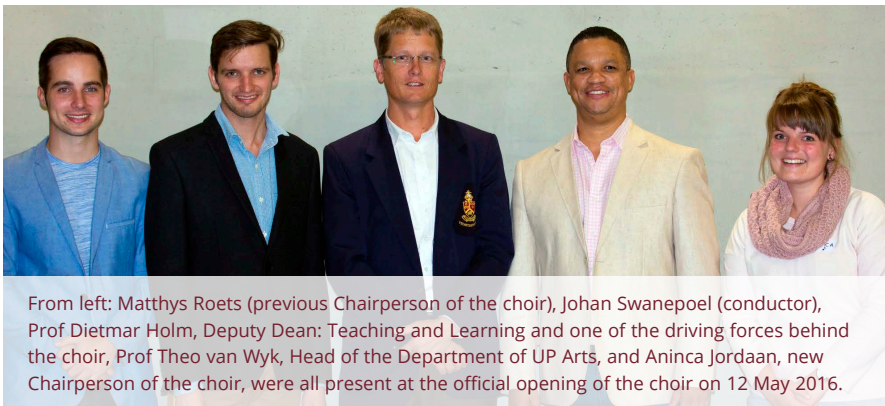
The value of choral singing on our campus was already recognised in 2009, when former student Aileen Pypers managed to convince 14 students and two staff members to meet and perform. Through her vision and determination, the Theiler Vocal Ensemble was born, laying the groundwork for the establishment of the Onderstepoort Community Choir this year. With the support of UP Arts, in particular, Prof Theo van Wyk, Head

of the Department of UP Arts, the choir had its first practice and official opening on 12 May 2016.

Our Faculty is as diverse and intimate as it is world class, and relationships formed at Onderstepoort overcome a lot of traditional barriers found on campuses elsewhere. Because of this, the choir welcomes academic staff, administrative and support staff, undergraduate students, postgraduate students and any individual who contributes to the Faculty in any way. The love of music is their common ground and the driving force lies in the will to unwind and have some fun amidst the stress. The choir is fortunate to have

Johan Swanepoel as its conductor and Michael Barrett, conductor of the Camerata, as a choral mentor. With the assistance of UP Arts and the Faculty, the Onderstepoort Community Choir intends to become an integral and visible part of the Onderstepoort culture and to be a platform where all lovers of music can unite. Performances are already scheduled for the Dean's Cultural Evening in July and the Principal's Concert in August. Be sure to come show your support for this unique Onderstepoort choir.

Prof Dietmar Holm and Dr June Williams are acknowledged for their invaluable dedication to this cause.



From left: Matthys Roets (previous Chairperson of the choir), Johan Swanepoel (conductor), Prof Dietmar Holm, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning and one of the driving forces behind the choir, Prof Theo van Wyk, Head of the Department of UP Arts, and Aninca Jordaan, new Chairperson of the choir, were all present at the official opening of the choir on 12 May 2016.

**"Music is the language of the spirit. It opens the secret of life, bringing peace, abolishing strife."**

– Khalil Gibram



Onderstepoort's very unique choir.

# Milk Laboratory accredited by **SANAS**

The Milk Laboratory in the Department of Production Animal Studies recently received ISO17025 accreditation. Results obtained by the laboratory are now recognised internationally. Accreditation complies with the University's Strategic Plan and the vision of the Faculty.

Congratulations to the laboratory personnel for this achievement. Milk Laboratory activities pertain to the following groups:

## Consumers

The Milk Laboratory performs bulk milk testing to help farmers ensure that they have cows producing safe high-quality milk. Food security is important to consumers and the cold chain of milk products reaching the consumer must be preserved. The Brucella Milk Ring Test is performed. Water is tested, as the quality of water may affect the efficacy of disinfectants used on farms. Antibiotic residue testing ensures that there are no residues in milk.

## Dairy producers

The Milk Laboratory uses a proactive approach to udder health and dairy management by using herd examinations to identify infected animals and manage them separately to contain the problem. During farm consultations, comprehensive

assessments are made. Farmers are advised on the correct treatment of animals. Somatic cell counts (SCCs) form the basis of udder health diagnosis. An increase in SCC indicates potential problems. Monthly participation in a proficiency testing scheme contributes to the quality and accuracy of counts.

## Students and researchers

Master's and doctoral degree students use data from the Milk

Laboratory for research. Final-year students are exposed to real-life case studies on farms and participate in solving udder health problems. Knowledge of udder health in South Africa and neighbouring countries is obtained, utilised for research, published and presented at national and international conferences. This allows for networking with specialists, collaboration with industry, as well as the testing of new products and remedies.



Back row (from left): Phriskey Mphahlele, Ofentse Ponatsego Nchako, Dikeledi Sebola, Nodolly Mmema, Dr Inge-Marié Petzer, Kgomotso Malekane  
Front row (from left): Renette Badenhorst, Fredah Konaite, Corrie Watermeyer, Joanne Karzis  
Insert: Anette Durand.

## Improving **FMD** control among smallholder farmers

**The research of Dr David Lazarus, a PhD student in the Department of Production Animal Studies, focused on foot-and-mouth-disease (FMD) vaccination and control in cattle at the wildlife and livestock interface of the Mnisi communal area. He recently gave a lecture on FMD.**

FMD is a menacing disease, particularly in cloven-hoofed livestock and wildlife species like the African buffalo, a known carrier of the disease, and impala herds, which can maintain the disease for a long time. FMD poses a serious risk to the livestock of farmers at the interface.

Dr Lazarus's study revealed that educating farmers and other stakeholders about preventing and controlling this highly infectious disease is making a significant contribution to solving their farming

problems, since farming is their only means of income. Information regarding vaccination forms an essential part of this activity.

Controlling FMD is divided into four elements: vaccination, which is freely available to farmers and provided by the government, informing each individual working with animals in the area, movement control and surveillance, which is found to be the most effective part of control.

According to Dr Lazarus, South Africa still has the best method of controlling

FMD compared to other African countries, mainly as a result of geographically controlled zones, including an FMD-infected Zone (incorporating all of the Kruger National Park), an FMD Protection Zone (bordering on the infected zone), an FMD High-surveillance Zone (along all of the northern border of the country) and an FMD-Free Zone.

Awareness of FMD is essential to ensuring a stable livestock industry, which benefits the economy and ensures the production of safe food.

# Phytomedicine students win awards

Three PhD students in the Phytomedicine Programme in the Department of Paraclinical Sciences, Dr Olubukola Adenubi, Dr Abimbola Aro and Bellonah Sakong, were recently honoured with prestigious awards. This highlights the quality of students in the Programme.

Dr Adenubi was awarded a fellowship by the L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science sub-Saharan Africa 2015 Programme. Dr Adenubi, who is a veterinarian and Schlumberger Faculty for the Future Fellow, is currently researching the tick repellent and acaricidal activities of various plant species. Dr Aro received a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Global Health Travel Award to attend and present her work at the Tuberculosis Co-morbidities and Immunopathogenesis Symposium held in the USA in early 2016. She obtained her PhD in April 2016 and is rejoining the Programme as a UP postdoctoral fellow to continue with her interesting work on the action

mechanism of antimycobacterial and immune modulatory plant compounds.

Sakong, a former National Research Foundation (NRF) intern in the Phytomedicine Programme, was awarded a travel grant from the South African Biochemistry and Informatics for Natural Products Network (SABINA) to attend the 9th Joint Natural Products Conference in Denmark in July 2016. This conference is a joint meeting organised by five of the top phytochemical societies in the world and was attended by leading experts in the field. The current leader of the research group, Prof Lyndy McGaw, Prof Kobus Eloff,

the founder of the Programme, and other phytomedicine students have attended this conference with support from their NRF scholarships, which includes travel grants.

The laboratories of the Phytomedicine Programme are currently being renovated, and with building work almost completed, research activities are set to reach new heights with the increased space and improved facilities. Five new PhD students and four postdoctoral fellows have joined the Programme in recent months. With the latest award of another three UP postdoctoral fellowships, research in this section has received a major boost.

## Honorary Member Award

Prof John Soley was the recipient of the most prestigious award given by the Anatomical Society of Southern Africa (ASSA) at its 44th annual conference in Bloemfontein.

The Honorary Member Award is presented to long-standing members of ASSA who have made significant contributions to ASSA and to anatomical sciences in Southern Africa.

Prof Soley became an official member of ASSA in 1982 and he has served as a council member, Acting Secretary and Honorary Editor of Proceedings. He also served as President of ASSA and he was a member of the organising committee of the 2009 Conference of the International Federation of Associations of Anatomists (IFAA). Prior to this, he co-organised the 1987 ASSA Conference and he was

involved in the 29th Congress of ASSA Scientific Programme. In 2007, as President, he represented ASSA at the First Conjoint International Conference on Fertility, Anatomy and Morphological Sciences in Nigeria.

Prof Soley holds a C3-rating from the National Research Foundation and specialises in various fields of male reproduction. He has also supervised postgraduate students in diverse aspects of comparative anatomy. His award is fitting recognition of the positive impact he has had on ASSA, his peers and the students he has mentored.



Prof Maryna Steyn, President of ASSA, presenting Prof John Soley with the ASSA Honorary Member Award.



PD by transrectal palpation in cattle is one of the core services provided by veterinary practices dealing with production animals. The purpose of PD is for farmers to get valuable information about the future production potential of their cows. Performing regular PDs has become a routine procedure in almost all cattle production systems.

## Pregnancy diagnosis challenge: a flagship education innovation

The Faculty hosted its second Pregnancy Diagnosis (PD) Challenge in 2016. This initiative aims to stimulate interest in rural veterinary practice among veterinary students.

Newly qualified veterinarians who are skilled in performing PDs will be an asset to any prospective employer.

Volunteer student participants were subjected to muscle strength testing on two occasions. During the second phase of the project, the accuracy of the students' PD skills was tested on a subset of six cows from a herd of beef cattle. Following the first round, the top 12 finalists with the highest accuracy were nominated to participate in the final phase of the project, during which the procedure

was repeated on 10 to 12 cows in a different herd. The Zoetis Onderstepoort PD Champion for 2016 is Niel Erasmus.

According to Prof Dietmar Holm, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning and co-founder of this event with Dr Annett Annandale, Manager of the Skills Laboratory, this education innovation project inspires, trains and rewards practical excellence in one of the most pertinent competencies required of a professional veterinarian.

## Faculty's Skills Lab goes from strength to strength

### InVeST 2017 Conference

The Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory is proud that its bid to host the fifth International Veterinary Simulation in Teaching (InVeST) Conference was successful. InVeST represents an international group of veterinary educators who are dedicated to promoting and advancing the use of simulation in veterinary education and research. Previous conferences were hosted by the veterinary schools at Colorado State University, University of Calgary, Ross University and Hannover University. The conference will be held from 10 to 12 April 2017.

### Community engagement project

It was a dream of the Skills Laboratory that young South Africans from local, previously disadvantaged

communities be trained in silicone and resin model or teaching aid development, within the scope of the in-house model development laboratory. An amount of R500 000 was secured through the Health and Welfare Sector Education and Training Authority (HWSETA). This enabled an eight-week training programme of 20 unemployed young South Africans and resulted in the registration of two business cooperatives that not only produce educational teaching aids for veterinary and healthcare institutions, but also for schools and animal welfare organisations. The training programme included mould-making and -casting, a silicone and material workshop, business and governance training and business plan writing. This project has created 13 permanent positions in a sustainable work environment, which led to independent income generation for the participants.

The first product sales have already taken place. Current products include an interactive three-dimensional rat model (which allows high school learners and biology students to study rat anatomy without live rat dissections),

a human skull anatomy model, different types of suture pads, a canine spay model (which allows veterinary science students to practise surgical techniques on a life-like model before performing their first surgery) and a canine ultrasound-guided cystocentesis model. A canine castration model and a urinary catheterisation model are in development. The products of the newly registered cooperatives were promoted at the Anatomical Society of South Africa Conference in May 2016. The new entrepreneurs will be able to adapt to product enquiries from different sectors, and expand the range of available items.

Funding for the project has been secured for another six months. However, additional funds are necessary to ensure ongoing support until the cooperatives are self-sustainable. Grant applications for further funding will be submitted. Marketing is led by Dr Annett Annandale and Ms Liezl Kok. Veterinary training aids and products were showcased and the newly designed product brochure was displayed at the VetEd Symposium in Glasgow, Scotland, in July 2016.

# OP Skills Laboratory team represents Faculty at the international VetEd Symposium

Dr Annett Annandale and Dr Elrien Scheepers attended the international Veterinary Education (VetEd) Symposium in Glasgow, Scotland, from 6 to 9 July.

They gave three oral and poster presentations, which were perceived very positively and led to much interest from conference delegates. The presentation titled "The OVH App: an interactive approach to preparation and improved surgical competence" generated particular excitement.

They also manned a Faculty stand to promote the International Veterinary

Simulation in Teaching (InVeST) 2017 Conference, which will be hosted by the Skills Laboratory, along with locally produced veterinary training aids developed through collaboration between Anatomoulds and the Skills Laboratory. Many influential leaders in the field of veterinary education showed an immense interest in the training aids. This is sure to lead to orders, which will assist the business cooperatives producing these models to become self-sustainable.

The VetEd 2016 Symposium proved to be a valuable networking opportunity for the Skills Laboratory and the Faculty on both a scientific and commercial level.



Dr Annett Annandale (left) and Dr Elrien Scheepers.



## Teaching and learning opportunities in Spain

Prof Neil Duncan of the Department of Paraclinical Sciences was awarded a travel grant allowing him to visit the Pathology Section of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) in Spain.

"I spent a week in the Pathology Section, taking part in undergraduate necropsy sessions, as well as presenting seminars and tutorials to the postgraduate students training

for the European Board Exams in Veterinary Pathology and scientists at the Centre for Research into Animal Health (CRESA), the government research centre associated with the UAB.

"The postgraduate students were enthusiastic – an essential quality, irrespective of the course being taken, and one that makes teaching so much more rewarding.

"The necropsy material was 95% porcine. Not only did the Pathology Section at UAB make duplicate sections of their more important diseases for our postgraduate teaching collection, they also organised a surprise going-away lunch, including Spanish omelette and wine. Exploring Barcelona in the evenings and experiencing the cuisine

was also a memorable experience. As always, the trip was too short," reported Prof Duncan.

Travel grants for staff and students will hopefully be possible soon, especially with the upcoming signing of the agreement between UAB and the University of Pretoria.



The post-mortem hall.

# Anatomy staff members shine at conferences in France

Dr Lizette du Plessis and Prof John Soley from the Department of Anatomy and Physiology recently attended the 10th Biennial meeting of the Association for Applied Animal Andrology (AAAA), as well as the International Conference of Animal Reproduction (ICAR) in Tours, France.

Prof Soley was one of the plenary speakers at the AAAA meeting and gave a lecture entitled

“A comparative overview of the sperm centriolar complex in mammals and birds: variations on a theme”.

Dr Du Plessis gave an oral presentation on the effects of the GnRH vaccine Improvac® on testicular tissue in young stallions at the same conference. Dr Du Plessis, who serves on the Association's Board of Directors, was also the guest editor for the international peer-reviewed journal, *Animal Reproduction Science*, which published all the plenary talks of the AAAA as full papers, as well

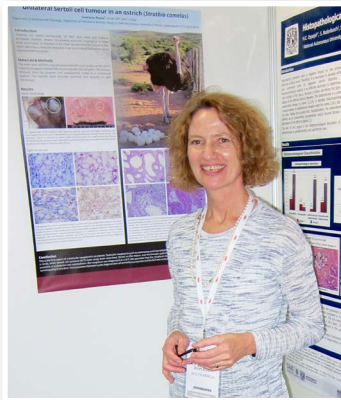
as the abstracts of all the oral and poster presentations. A total of 125 delegates from 26 countries attended the AAAA meeting.

The ICAR meeting that followed the AAAA Conference was attended by more than 800 people from across the world. Dr Du Plessis presented a poster at the ICAR meeting detailing the first recorded incidence of a Sertoli cell tumor in the ostrich.

Networking with delegates at both conferences resulted in a number of potential research collaborations.



The old town square in Tours, France, surrounded by the old wooden buildings for which the city is famous. Tours is situated in the heart of the Loire Valley.



Dr Du Plessis manning her poster at ICAR.



Dr Du Plessis (second from right) with some of the plenary speakers at the AAAA meeting. From left: Harald Sieme (Germany), Erdoğan Memili (USA), Abdullah Kaya (Turkey), John Soley (South Africa), Joseph Saragusty (Germany) and Peter Chenoweth (Australia).

## New staff member joins the Electron Microscopy Unit (EMU)

Ms Antoinette Buys recently joined the Electron Microscopy Unit in the Department of Anatomy and Physiology at the Onderstepoort Campus as a Control Technical Assistant.

She received her bachelor's degree in Medical Sciences at the University of Pretoria in 2008, followed by an honours degree and a master's degree cum laude in Anatomy, specialising in Cell Biology. Currently, she is continuing with her doctoral degree at the Faculty of Veterinary Science. Previously, she worked at the University's Hatfield Campus in the Laboratory for Microscopy and Microanalysis.

Buys has extensive experience in microscopy and related techniques, including light, confocal and fluorescent microscopy, atomic force microscopy, and transmission and scanning electron microscopy. She has more than 20 articles in peer-reviewed journals and conference contributions to her name. She likes to cycle in her free time and has participated in a number of cycle races and triathlons.



Ms Antoinette Buys.



# AUTUMN GRADUATION



The PhD graduates and their supervisors celebrate after their graduation. Prof Vinny Naidoo, Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies (front, far left), was also present.

No less than 10 PhDs were awarded at this year's autumn graduation ceremony on 21 April 2016. This is the most PhDs conferred at a single graduation ceremony in the Faculty's history. As has become the custom, the Faculty once again held a PhD celebration ceremony to honour the achievements of these graduates. The ceremony, which was held just a day before the graduation ceremony, also provided the new graduates the opportunity to present the culmination of the hard work that went into their respective theses to peers, colleagues, family and friends. All the candidates were introduced by their supervisors.

The 10 graduates who can now write the title PhD behind their names are Dr Timothy Woma, Dr Nlingisizi Babayani, Dr Jolly Musoke, Dr Umar Bello, Dr Sybrand van Sittert, Prof Patrick Page, Prof Amelia Goddard, Dr Marthinus Hartman, Dr Thanyani Ramadwa and Dr Abimbola Aro.

The quality of research and the wide variety of disciplines that were covered in their presentations bodes well for the Faculty's future

in terms of being a more research-intensive institution, as measured by the quality of the publications and master's and PhD graduates it produces.

Prof Vinny Naidoo, Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies in the Faculty, who also welcomed the guests at the PhD celebration, afterwards said that the Faculty is extremely proud to have had 10 PhD candidates graduate at the autumn 2016 graduation ceremony.

"In addition, the Faculty is also proud to have had the largest group of PhD graduates to qualify in the Faculty's history, three of which were in clinical studies," Prof Naidoo said.

*A total of 34 master's degrees were also conferred at the autumn graduation ceremony, of which a record 22 derived from the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases.*



Newly graduated veterinarian, Dr Debbie van Dyk, shares a joyous but emotional moment with her mother, Sadie van Dyk, after her graduation.

## Passion and purpose earns Debbie van Dyk a BVSc degree at age 56

It does not often happen that you obtain any degree at the age of 56, even more so a BVSc degree. Through passion and determination, this is ultimately what Dr Debbie van Dyk accomplished. She showed remarkable endurance to qualify as a veterinarian in April 2016.

Debbie matriculated from Westville Girls High in 1976. She knew from an early age that she wanted to be a veterinarian, but in those days the veterinary profession was exceedingly male dominated with only a handful of women being accepted every year. Debbie's school marks did not gain her one of those coveted spots, so she completed a BSc degree in Zoology and Entomology at Rhodes University instead.

Upon completion of her degree, she completed a Higher Diploma in Education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) and taught Biology, Physical Science and Mathematics at high schools for several years. Her ambition to work with animals, however, did not abate and she eventually went back to UKZN where she completed her honours and master's degrees in Zoology. Here, she was involved in research and lecturing. This sparked her second passion, namely education. After a tenure lecturing at a Teachers' Training College, she started a business in adult education and training, which she ran for 14 years.

In 1995, she once again applied to Onderstepoort, but was rejected because she lacked the prerequisite subjects. She then acquired the necessary credit and reapplied. Again, she was denied her dream when the selection committee notified her that, despite having obtained a master's degree, the first-year results of her primary bachelor's degree were older than seven years and were no longer acceptable as credits. The only remedy,

she was informed, was to embark on another primary degree.

In 2007, after a period of introspection, she resolved to try one last time before putting it to rest. Again she was rejected because she did not have any Animal Science subjects in her primary degree. So she became a student again and emerged with the necessary credits in Nutrition and Animal Science two years later.

Finally, she was accepted. Debbie was given credit for the first two years of the three-year bachelor's degree in Animal Biology, and completed the third year in 2011.

In 2012, she finally realised her life-long objective when she was enrolled on the BVSc programme. She completed the degree in 2015 at the

age of 56 and, after the graduation ceremony in April 2016, spent an emotional moment soaking up the reality of the achievement with her mother, Sadie, who, as Debbie says, has been the most constant force in her life, backing her in every way, helping out financially and encouraging her to stay focused and not give up, despite the obstacles. A sad physical absence was Debbie's father, Corrie, who passed away unexpectedly in 2013, but Debbie knows that he would have been so proud that she is finally a veterinarian. Debbie also gives quiet acknowledgement to the handful of people who helped her along the way, calling them "angels" who always seemed to appear when she needed them the most. She says: "It is a dream fulfilled and I feel so lucky that I get to start a new career after a lifetime of yearning."



Dr Robin Hamman (left), who obtained her MMedVet degree in record time, celebrates her graduation with Prof Dietmar Holm, her supervisor.



The graduation ceremony of newly graduated veterinarian, Dr Thapelo Makae, was even more special because it was attended by his wife and three young daughters.

# Utrecht students share their internship experience at Mnisi

It was Monday, 9 May 2016, when we, two Dutch veterinary science students from the University of Utrecht, and our entourage, Dr Hein Stoltz and Mohamed, arrived at Hans Hoheisen (HH) for an internship within the Mnisi Community Programme (MCP).

The internship is part of a three-year master's degree period (the veterinary degree at Utrecht consists of a three-year bachelor's and a three-year master's degree component), and is made possible by an agreement between the faculties of Veterinary Science of the universities of Pretoria and Utrecht. This project, under the supervision of Prof Jongejan (Utrecht) and Dr Stoltz (Pretoria) has been running for four years. Its main emphasis has been on tick infestations on goats in the Mnisi area. This year, we tested the effect of a pour-on acaricide (Delete-All) to control tick infestations on goats. It is great to contribute to the MCP, since we are not only helping goats, but we are also taking part in community engagement. In addition, Mnisi is a really interesting area to work in and the fact that it is near the Kruger National Park is a big plus for us. It makes our travel expenses all the more worthwhile.

Before we arrived at HH, we spent a week at Onderstepoort where our external supervisor, Dr Stoltz, showed us around. We were really impressed by the Skills Laboratory, and wish we had one in Utrecht. During one of the lectures we attended, we got showered in glitter, flour and liquor by the BVSc V class who celebrated their last day of lectures. Every time we find some leftover glitter, those silly fifth-year students are in our thoughts.



Utrecht students with their environmental monitors and patients at the Hluvukani Clinic.

During the first week at HH, Dr Stoltz showed us the area and introduced us to the staff. We visited the Hluvukani Clinic and diptanks within the Mnisi area. This is also where we met the environmental monitors. Two of them were assigned to us and we really could not have done it without them. A big shout-out to Liven Ndlovu and Philmon Mbhungele (Mr Fantastic). We were hoping to start in the second week, but because of "African time", our plans were delayed by a week, which takes some getting used to for us punctual Dutchies.

So far, we have not been disappointed. It is hard work, as goats can be quite a handful. We have had screamers, biters and kickers, but we are happy to get experience abroad and to do some field work in Africa for a change.

## Further sponsorships from Abaxis a boost for wildlife research

Abaxis Europe has furthered its support for wildlife research in the Faculty by donating a Vet Scan HM5 haematology machine and an i-Stat blood gas analyser with consumables, analysis rotors and cards to the Department of Paraclinical Sciences.

These devices are fully portable, which will allow our researchers to set up a mini clinical pathology laboratory in the field. The devices have already been implemented in a project related to bush babies and will also be used in many other projects on wildlife ecophysiology, chemical immobilisation and anaesthesia, as well as wildlife health and production. The company's total sponsorship amounts to about R650 000.



The MH5 haematology device is already used in a project involving bush babies.



Arop Pluim

# Arop Pluim does it again

The Faculty's Arop Pluim is no unknown horse in show arenas, and national and international judges know him well. He is also very popular at the World of Dogs and Cats pet expo, where his unbelievably docile temperament is famous and there is talk of the "beautiful grey gentle giant".

The Nooitgedacht Horse Breeders Society's National Championship Show took place on 22 and 23 April 2016. It was the first national show that the stallion attended. This show is the main event of the year for Nooitgedachter horses, and is the show where the Faculty has the most participants. All the top breeders compete for the Show Horse of the Year Award.

This prestigious award is awarded to the horse that scores the highest marks in both the breed and ridden classes during the show.

Arop Pluim and his rider, Surita Kelbrick, entered nine classes over the course of the two-day event.

Arop Pluim was entered in the Purebred Stallion Six Years and Older class, which is the most sought-after class. It means a lot to any stud to win this class, and Arop Pluim won this class without contest.

He was well prepared and he and his rider blew the judges away. He was also crowned Grand Champion Purebred Senior Stallion.

Arop Pluim also won the Novice 4 and 5 dressage classes and was appointed as the National Dressage Champion. He also won the Country Pleasure Horse class.

He received first prize in the Open Show Riding class, which was a very large class, and the Champion Show Riding class.

In the working riding event, which presented a challenging course, Arop Pluim surprised everyone by scoring 9.5 out of 10 for 8 out of 10 obstacles in one class, 9 out of 10 in another and 8.8 out of 10 in the final class. This is extremely good and a wonderful achievement. He was also crowned as Working Riding Champion.

After the first two horses failed to complete the challenging course, Arop Pluim surprised everyone when he tackled the course with so much grace and confidence. The stallion received a third place in the Show Hunter class, even after he was mistakenly entered.

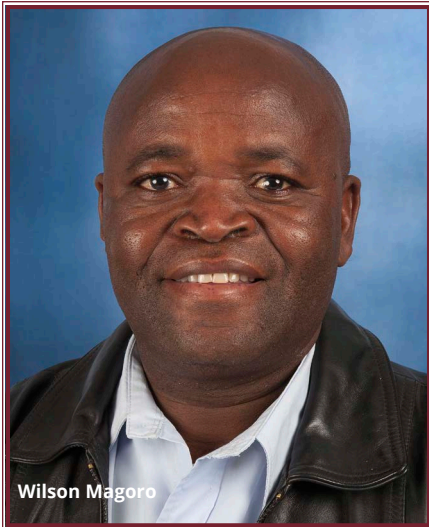
He received first place in the Show Hack class and was crowned Show Hack Champion.

At the end of the show, in addition to his other achievements, this remarkable horse was also elected Show Horse of the Year and Adult Victor Ludorum during the prize giving. He was one of three horses to receive a gold pin with his rider.

Arop Pluim truly showed his abilities and Kelbrick proved that he is an exquisite Nooitgedachter breeding stallion. The University of Pretoria is the proud owner of this superb stallion.

# As long as the sun keeps shining for me, my days are blessed

Wilson Magoro (47), a messenger and senior driver at the Faculty, has a very positive philosophy about life that provides one with the realisation that life must not be taken for granted.



Wilson is someone with high ambitions, driven by a positive attitude. "If I wake up to the sun smiling on me, I know that I am blessed with a new day and an opportunity to make the best of it," he says.

Wilson was raised in the Turfloop area in Polokwane and came from

a poor family with 12 siblings. While still at school, he lost his dad in 1982, and the deaths of one sister and three brothers in various stages of his life brought about terrible heartache. He had to complete his matric in 1988 under these traumatic circumstances, and afterwards, Wilson, as the eldest son, took it upon himself to assist the family financially by joining the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) in Musina. Unfortunately, the salary he earned was not enough to provide sufficiently for his family.

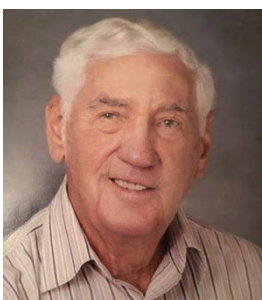
In 1992, he became a security officer at Media24 and worked there until Naspers retrenched him in 2002. However, through all of this, Wilson's aspirations to better himself neither dwindle nor demised.

He bought himself a Nissan 1400 bakkie and worked as an independent loading and delivery

contractor for the next nine years, until being appointed at the Faculty in 2012. He describes his job in the following way: "I am a messenger roaming around the Onderstepoort Campus carrying heavy loads of letters like rocks and delivering them where they must go. My shoes are complaining to me every day that they need a rest. However, at the end of the day, this is my job, a job that I know well and I am blessed to have. If I can use my job to better my life in any way, this is what I will do."

In the five years since Wilson joined the Faculty, he has wasted no time in grasping opportunities to enrich his life. Recently, he completed Level 4 English in Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), and he plans to complete Level 5 in Mathematics.

Wilson aspires to further his studies in marketing and communication pending the availability of funds.



Dr Colin Cameron, once described as one of the most eminent veterinarians that South Africa has produced to date, passed away on 3 August 2016.

Dr Cameron completed the BVSc degree at the Faculty of Veterinary Science in 1959 and spent the first 24 years of his career at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI). His postgraduate qualifications comprised a DVSc degree (1973) and a master's

## IN MEMORIAM:

### Dr Colin McKenzie Cameron

degree in Public Administration (1981), both conferred by the University of Pretoria. He conducted excellent research in the bacteriology discipline, inter alia, developing several vaccines, was promoted to Deputy Director of the Institute in 1982 and managed its vaccine factory (now known as Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP)) for several years. He served as President of the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) from 1980 to 1982 and as President of the Public Service Organisation of South Africa from 1979 to 1990. In 1985, he moved to the Department of Health as one of its chief directors, ending his career in government service as

Director-General of the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism from 1992 to 1997.

After retiring, he served as part-time Chief Executive Officer of SAVA for seven years (2002 to 2009), and from 2002, took over the editorship of the *Journal of the South African Veterinary Association*. The prestigious awards bestowed upon him during his illustrious career include Honorary Life Membership of SAVA in 2015, President's Award and Gold Medal of SAVA, Laureatus Award from the University of Pretoria, and Honorary Life President of the Public Service Association of South Africa.

# Short Course in Applied Molecular Epidemiology of Infectious Diseases at the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM), Antwerp, Belgium

Dr Charles Byaruhanga

The training from 25 April to 6 May was facilitated by ITM and funded by the Belgian Directorate for Development Cooperation (DGD). This was a two-week course for PhD candidates and early postdoctoral fellows, in which participants learnt to apply molecular tools in infectious disease research. During the first week, the advanced laboratory and computer skills training were covered in preparation for the specialised part. In the second week, the participants chose between leishmaniasis, malaria and tuberculosis for expert training in advanced techniques used in the research of these infectious diseases.

The training was very beneficial to us as scientists. We shall apply the skills and knowledge acquired from this course in the design and implementation of logical molecular and epidemiological studies, which can improve the understanding of the epidemiology of infectious diseases and contribute to the diagnosis, control and prevention of infectious diseases among communities.



Participants (postdoctoral fellows and PhD candidates) from the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria, who attended the Short Course in Applied Molecular Epidemiology at the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium, were Peter Coetzee (left), Gloria Patsanza (front centre), Donald Mukolwe Lubembe (back centre) and Charles Byaruhanga (right).

## Faculty represented at UP Open Day 2016



# PGSA Happy Hour

On Friday 27 May, the Executive Committee of the Postgraduate Students' Association (PGSA) organised another Happy Hour for all its members to come together, network and unwind. This time, the Happy Hour topic was "Postgraduate issues – an open discussion". It was hosted in the Postgraduate Centre on the Onderstepoort Campus. Guidance and knowledge was provided by Rene Perridge (Fundraising and Events), Fransie Lottering (Administrator), Leonie Johnson (Postgraduate Student Administration) and Teballo Riba (Enrollment and Student Administration). The event was well attended by postgraduate students from all departments.

During the meeting, the students were able to ask questions in a safe environment about aspects of their welfare in the Faculty in general and any other issues arising in their studies, at home or on campus. One of the hot topics that was discussed was the issue of the ambiguity that seems to exist around postdoctoral fellows and whether they are designated as staff or students. We learnt that they are, in fact, students.

Another key topic that was discussed was the issue of funding and bursaries available to PhD students, the availability of which has dropped drastically this year compared to last year. This has left some PhD students without any kind of financial aid. The advice given to all students was to talk to their supervisors to get assistance in applying for bursaries from outside sources, as the University of Pretoria's postgraduate funding is unfortunately limited this year. Furthermore, the issue of students falling behind and

having to delay their studies was raised. In such circumstances, it is best to speak privately to the staff in the Dean's Office to discuss a way forward. Many of the students felt that more often than not, the reasons for delays are beyond their control, as animal-based research often deals with special permits and approvals that can take long to obtain. Faculty management is acutely aware of this and aims to improve relations with responsible authorities in order to tackle this problem.

Next, Joe Vhengani spoke about his current efforts towards the institution of an office especially for postgraduate students.

This office will help students transition smoothly into a new learning environment and help them settle into the academic world hassle-free. Students suggested that the office could perhaps offer services such as airport shuttles to the residences and

a tour of the residence and campus to newcomers to help them acclimatise to their new surroundings.

Another important matter was the renewal of visas, which has been troublesome in the past. Therefore, Vhengani suggested that a visa extension should be sought at least three months prior to the date of expiration.

Finally, an additional key aspect was the services of off-campus and over-the-phone student support by registered psychologists. Teballo Riba explained the way in which students can ask for such support from Faculty management so that students coping with personal issues can be aware that they are not alone and can seek professional help.

After thoroughly discussing these important matters, it was finally time for the students to enjoy some refreshments and a variety of nibbles.



# Veterinary students on a mission to uplift veterinary education throughout Africa

[Vet Books for Africa initiative]

Vet Books for Africa is a truly unique, student-run initiative that was established in 1993. The project aims to distribute veterinary textbooks, journals and other educational tools to veterinary faculties in countries in southern and central Africa. The team consists of eight veterinary students from Onderstepoort. They will undertake a six-week road trip during November and December to Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Mozambique and Malawi.



Vet Books for Africa team 2016.

Making this trip a reality is not an easy task. It takes two years of intense fundraising, planning and dedication. The project is completely dependent on sponsorships and donations from various companies and institutions, and the itinerary is massive. In addition to visiting the universities, Vet Books for Africa also volunteers resources and time to several charities along the way. Among others, the team aims to help animal rehabilitation centres, sanctuaries and branches of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). They aim to provide each visiting point with as many vital resources as they can. This includes resources like medicine, school clothing and stationery, clothes and simply their time and knowledge, all of which are necessary for the continued operation and success of these charities and organisations.

Through their actions, Vet Books for Africa hopes to promote education and conservation, and unite veterinary students across Africa in order to achieve the goal of creating a sustainable environment for animals and humans alike, one that future generations can still enjoy.

Over the last year and a half, the project committee has been gathering the financial resources they need to make this the biggest trip yet. After an intense meeting with Ascendis Health – Phytovet Division, the company agreed to make a substantial financial contribution. This has allowed the Vet Books for Africa Committee to expand the scope of the project to include Uganda.

Not only did the company contribute financially, it also provided the option of using additional means of

transport. It allowed the students to take even more resources than they had on previous trips, and to focus their efforts on resource collection for the rest of the year.

Collection of resources will be conducted in a number of ways. Funds obtained from events such as the 94.7 cycle event and the biennial Onderstepoort dodge ball event will be used to buy equipment and textbooks at reduced prices. In addition, the Vet Books for Africa team held a book drive to collect second-hand textbooks at the Faculty. This drive ran from 18 July to 1 August 2016.

The committee will continue to look for sponsors. “We have been given a huge opportunity by our sponsors to extend the footprint of Vet Books for Africa this year, so join us on our journey and help make this the most impactful trip yet,” said Ayla Newmarch of Vet Books for Africa.

## For more information

Please contact Ayla Newmarch at [info@vetbooksforafrica.org](mailto:info@vetbooksforafrica.org) or [Ayla.newmarch@gmail.com](mailto:Ayla.newmarch@gmail.com) and 060 432 8090 or alternatively Wian Bester (2016 Chairperson) at 072 908 9712 or [wianbester@yahoo.com](mailto:wianbester@yahoo.com) for more information.

You can also visit the website at <http://vetbooksforafrica.org/>