

Community Engagement Newsletter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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Faculty of Veterinary Science
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ADVENTURING WITH ELEPHANTS

Theunis Griessel and Mzwanele Bekayeke (BVSc III)

It was a cold, crisp morning when five excited veterinary students from the University of Pretoria, set out to Bela-Bela on 7 June 2017. We were on a mission: to teach underprivileged learners from the Jinnah Park Primary School more about animals and how to treat and look after them, as well as their environment. We would accomplish this with a little the help from the gentle giants at Adventures with Elephants.

We left early in the morning from Onderstepoort campus to stop at Bela-Bela Superspar before heading to the school to pick up the eight learners who would spend the day with us. Bela-Bela Superspar was very generous; sponsoring bulky lunch packs ourselves, as well as for the learners and the teacher who accompanied us. When we arrived at Jinnah Park Primary school, we could feel our excitement growing and when the learners filed into the mini bus, we could see they were just as excited. After exchanging names and setting down a few ground rules, we set out on our adventure.

When we reached Adventures with Elephants, another group of students from the University of Pretoria was still busy with their community engagement project. This meant we had a bit of time on our hands. We spent this time trying



The veterinary science group with their a staff member from Bela-Bela Superspar.

to keep the learners away from Trouble. Trouble, is the resident meerkat at Adventures with Elephants. The learners were fascinated with the little meerkat, who was only interested in finding the tastiest insect he could eat. Without planning it, he provided us our first opportunity to teach the learners how to treat and handle animals in a delicate manner.

After our encounter with Trouble, we asked the learners to complete a questionnaire that we had prepared for them. The questionnaire was designed to determine how much the learners knew about animals, and how to treat and look after them. Each veterinary science student took two learners and helped them if they were unsure about a question. We then had the delicious lunch packs Bela Bela Superspar had packed for us.

Once all our stomachs were full, we gathered the learners around the computer screen Adventures with Elephants had provided for the presentation. We used a video, our PowerPoint presentation, and an interactive game to teach the learners more about elephants, how to treat animals and what their basic needs are. The learners were then asked to fill in the same questionnaire again to see whether they had learnt anything from the session. Then, as Mr Sean Hensman from Adventures with Elephants was laying down the last few rules and highlighting a few points concerning conservation, the gentle giants came strolling in quietly. The learners' faces lit up with joy when they noticed the elephants. One of the Adventures with Elephants staff members then proceeded to take us to each of the elephants; telling us their names and showing us all the different tricks they could do. From remembering

learners' names to playing soccer with the elephants, we were all amazed at how intelligent these animals were.

When all the fun and games were done, we asked the learners if they remembered the "Five Freedoms" about animal needs we had taught them during our presentation. It was wonderful to see that they remembered them all. We then issued each learner with a signed certificate with their names on certifying that they know the "Five Freedoms". We also gave them a couple of tasty treats.

After a quick informal demonstration on the training of dogs used for poacher tracking, we all climbed back into the mini bus and headed back to the school to drop the learners off. We were a bit disappointed that our adventure had ended so quickly. Driving home, we really felt that we had taught the learners more about animals and how to treat and look

after them correctly. Our hope is that they will apply this knowledge to their own animals and pass this information on to all the people in their community. It was an amazing and fulfilling experience working with the elephants and learners. We cannot thank Bela Bela Superspar and Adventures with Elephants enough for all their generosity, hospitality and for making our adventure with the elephants possible.



OP SKILLS LABORATORY DONATE CONFERENCE BAGS

Dr Elrien Scheepers (Veterinarian)

During the planning stages of the International Veterinary Simulation in Teaching Conference (InVeST) 2017, Dr Annett Annandale and Dr Elrien Scheepers from the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory, decided to put their used conference bags from previous conference to good use. All prospective conference delegates were therefore asked to bring used conference bags along as a donation to Onderstepoort Primary School just down the road from the Faculty of Veterinary Science of the University of Pretoria.

The response from InVeST delegates was excellent. One delegate even paid excess luggage fees so that she could fly over with bags, crayons and stickers that her 12-year-old daughter collected amongst her school friends. After making arrangements with the principal of Onderstepoort Primary School, Dr Annandale, Dr Scheepers and Mrs San Fick went to the school on Wednesday, 14 June. They were met by 370 enthusiastic learners and a few very friendly teachers. Each class was visited, from Grade R to Grade 7. The learners were very excited to each receive a few sweets, which were kept by the teachers for them until after lunch. They greeted their visitors with rhymes and there was lots of hand clapping, happy smiles and waves.

Fifty used conference bags, 400 A4 exercise books, 800 pens and pencils, coloring books, puzzles, small toys and blankets were handed over to the teachers. The blankets



The organisers, Annett, Elrien and San with some of the children from Onderstepoort Primary School.



Loads of donations have been collected for this worthy cause.

will specifically be used by the crèche, so that children can be kept warm when they sit still during reading time or take naps during the day. The principal said that the conference bags will be used to reward any child that may achieve a set goal, weather academic or in sports.

In the words of the principal,

“Dear Dr, I Mr M. J. Nyathi, as the principal of Onderstepoort Primary, would like to thank you for the donation received by the school from you by my second in charge Mrs Magoai. May the Almighty Bless each and every person who was involved in the project and those that contributed to ensure that you support our learners with warm blankets, stationery and bags to carry their books to school. Thank you so much”.

MEETING

Community Engagement Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, 29 November at 13:30.



USING THE YOUTH TO CHANGE A COMMUNITY

Keagan Loader, Bianca Olivier, Masivuye Bulube, Philippus van Aswegen and Songezo Pepu (BVSc III)

Veterinary Professional Life (VPL) 300 group 27 visited the People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) in Soweto. The PDSA do an enormous amount for the community, providing both veterinary care and education. We thought it would be fitting to go there and assist in the education of the community, focusing our attention on correct animal handling.

Our presentation consisted of showing children basic handling techniques, such as teaching dog body language, what to feed a dog and how to correctly tie up a dog if need be. The talk was concluded by briefly addressing rabies awareness. This was made easier through the use of 50 rabies booklets, donated by the Global Alliance for Rabies Control. These booklets are perfect for teaching children. They make concepts basic and easy to understand, portraying them in an interactive fashion.

The booklets contain all the vital information and will ensure that what we taught will remain fresh in their minds and

at their fingertips if ever they need a reminder. Of the 50 booklets, the remainder were left in the reception to the clinic for anyone visiting to take. This allowed us to hopefully impact on someone’s life, even if they were not physically taught by us.

Overall, it was a thoroughly rewarding experience. We hope that the children we taught will find a new love and understanding for animals. We hope they will go out into their community and share their knowledge. We hope that they will be the generation that goes out and makes a difference in their community.

ONDERSTEPOORT PRIMARY SCHOOLS' CURIOUS MINDS

Vernon Christians, André Els, Jordan Joselowitz, Karabo Semenya and Ramoni Joubert (BVSc III)

As part of our veterinary training and the community engagement initiative of the Veterinary Professional Life (VPL) 300 module, we, a group of five third-year veterinary science students, got assigned to the Onderstepoort Primary School, just a stone throw away from the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

To our amusement, we found informed young minds more than curious about our topic and animals in general, but not knowing about what the Faculty has to offer. Our experience at the school was incredibly positive.

With prior visiting arrangements and permission from Mr M. J. Nyathi, the principal, the group set out to assess what the learners knew on the basic aspects of primary animal healthcare.

We focused on dogs as pets in particular, and how to become a veterinarian. We were surprised at what they already know and mostly had to substantiate their knowledge. Our audience mostly consisted of Grade 7s, and interested pupils from Grades 5 and 6.

We presented a simplified version of the following topics:

- the five freedoms that an animal should have
- demonstrated by the use of household groceries and everyday routines
- understanding body language of a dog

- optimal body condition scoring
- humane treatment of animals
- what a veterinarian is
- how and where to study to become a veterinarian
- why animals should be taken to a veterinarian, and
- the role of the veterinarian in animal health

We anticipated a reluctance of participation from the learners, but to our surprise, the entire class's enthusiasm was superlative. This participatory and interactive spirit of the learners allowed us insight into what they understood under each of these topics. In the end we only had to fill in the rest of the pieces of the puzzle to make sure that our message was conveyed.

We found that the learners were very interested in what we had to say, and even more eager to interact with us and ask questions. They seemed most taken with the idea that they could one day become veterinarians too (after clearing up the difference between veterinarian and vegetarian). We found that we had greatly underestimated the learners' knowledge base.

We, as a group, got to fully appreciate the value and initiative of community engagement forming part of our training as veterinary science students. We left the school sparking a definite curiosity and awareness on their already good sound knowledge of primary animal health care and the veterinary profession. We feel privileged to have visited Onderstepoort Primary School and to have interacted with these enthusiastic learners.



The learners of Onderstepoort Primary School were very eager to learn more about veterinary science.



DONATIONS: All donations received will be used for community engagement purposes, specifically in less fortunate communities. Please contact one of the following people if you would like to donate money, dog food, collars, leashes, blankets or your time:

Sr Sarah Johnson 012 529 8387
Dr Eugene Machimana 012 529 8100

Small Animal Section Head & Referrals Co-ordinator
Community Engagement Chairperson

sarah.johnson@up.ac.za
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CONTROLLING FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE OUTBREAK

Jayde Flax, Mareli Brand, Erin Seery and Liané van der Westhuizen

Our group, consisting of four veterinary science students, headed to Hans Hoheisen Research centre on 4 June for our two-week clinic rotation at Hluvukani Animal Health Clinic (HAHC). Dr Frans van Heerden was the locum that worked with us for the two weeks.

Due to the foot and mouth disease outbreak in the area in April, the areas around Hluvukani are divided into wards, and specific students were allocated to a certain ward. We were only allowed to touch the animals within our designated ward.

Every morning, we visited dip tanks, where we had to inspect the animals for any signs of foot and mouth disease. After the dip tank visits, we went on call-outs. A highlight during our two-week rotation was a pregnant cow with a metacarpal fracture, which we fixed with a modified Robert Jones bandage. In the commercial farming industry, the cow would usually be culled as it is not economically feasible to treat. However, in a community like Hluvukani, one cow is worth a lot, and the community members cannot afford to lose one cow, especially since she is pregnant. You have to do anything in your power to save the animal. We were really impressed with the overall condition of the animals, and how well the farmers look after them.

We did a school talk at Muchuchi Primary School to Grade 3 learners. We read them a story about a dog named Sam, and how they should care for him. We also discussed the “five freedoms” of animals with them, utilising pictures to aid in our explanation. This was a heart-warming experience for us.

The people in Hluvukani were really friendly and they appreciate the work we do in their community. As such, it was a very rewarding experience.



Onderstepoort students working with the animals in the Hluvukani area.

LEAVING A LASTING FOOTPRINT IN MAMELODI

Muhammed Moola, Annelie Coetzer, Johannes Nel, Prioshan Reddy and Sinead Laing, (BVSc III)

Footprints and Paws Educational Initiative in Mamelodi – six veterinary students with one goal: to create the link between fundamental animal education, community engagement and animal health.

On 6 June 2017, we visited N’wa-Vangani Primary School in Mamelodi to educate Grade 7 learners on basic animal welfare, proper handling of animals and rabies awareness. Our main goal was to reduce fear of animals, inspire love and compassion, as well as promote proper animal welfare from the learners.

We presented to a large group of 90 learners. One of the main challenges in this regard was to keep everyone

involved. To overcome this obstacle, we used a very interactive approach to our presentation to insure the core message of our mission was heard. Using visual aids, interactive posters and group activities, we were able to keep everyone involved. The learners were very enthusiastic and keen to participate in all of our educational games, making our job so much easier. We are grateful to the Global Alliance for Rabies Control for donating 100 rabies education booklets, which we handed out during our discussion on rabies awareness. We used the content of the booklets to help the learners improve their understanding of the importance of rabies control, as well as what to look out for on a daily basis.

Our overall experience of the project was undoubtedly rewarding. Engaging with the learners, sharing knowledge and the love we have for animals helped



The rabies education booklets helped to improve learners' understanding.

us to understand the community better and lay down a foundation to contribute to a sustainable future for animal welfare and care.

Benefits of our community engagement project not only included the opportunity for the learners to make better, more educated decisions concerning the welfare of their animals, but also helped us to improve our people skills. In addition, we gained an understanding of different community dynamics. With the help of the rabies booklets, the learners will also be able to share their knowledge with other members of the community.



The educational session at N'wa-Vangani Primary School proved to be rewarding for both the learners and the veterinary science students.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Event	Venue	Date
Production Animal Outreach Clinic	Makapanstad & Ratjiepan Project	Tuesdays and Wednesdays
Mamelodi Animal Health Care (MAHC)	Mamelodi Campus	Mondays to Fridays
Mnisi Community Project	Hlulukani	Mondays to Fridays



DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO PUBLISH?

The Community Engagement Committee invites you to submit short articles to be published in the next Newsletter (Summer 2017). The Community Engagement article should not be more than 1 page long. Contact person Dr Eugene Machimana Tel: (012) 529 8100 (w) Email: eugene.machimana@up.ac.za

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