

Community Engagement Newsletter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Veterinary Science
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WHAT WE LEARNED FROM TSOGO HIGH SCHOOL

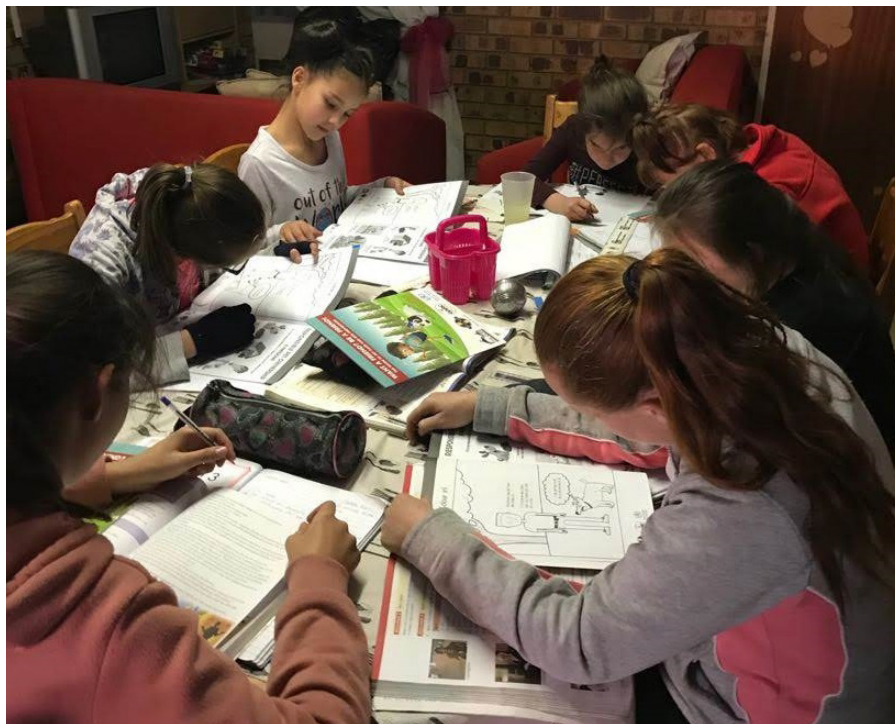
Nicola Foord (BVSc III)

The sun was still below the horizon when we left Onderstepoort Campus for our community engagement at Tsogo High School. It was about 3° C degrees and the water on my windscreen had iced over. About 30 minutes later, we were standing outside the school. After the many greetings from both learners and teachers, we proceeded to follow them to their early morning assembly.

It was something quite amazing to witness. Coming from a school that sang the national anthem only now and again at assembly, I was in quite a bit of awe when the school body began their morning songs and prayers. Mrs Makgae, the Vice-Principal, who had a stunning voice, led the whole school, and I realised how essential it was to have something like this, to start the young learners with something so enjoyable, so soulful before they started the grind for the day.

After that, we headed to the respective classes. We had been asked to engage the Grade 8s about rabies and pet health care. We must say, it was quite a humbling experience. We tried to make





the questions were quite astounding. For example, one learner asked about our take on tooth clipping, ear notching, tail docking and antibiotics in production animals – something we perhaps would not have the knowledge to ask in first or second year of BVS III.

Tsogo High school is quite an amazing school. Afterwards, we had tea and cake with the staff, and we really get the sense that despite the poor funds and the poverty in the surrounding area, the school was really making a name for itself. The teachers were incredibly passionate and driven, and in that way, role models for the learners.

You hear about the many schools that are underfunded with teachers that are not so passionate about their jobs, and it was refreshing to see Tsogo High School shows otherwise.

I would like to believe we made an impact on the learners, and that hopefully they had taken some of the knowledge about rabies back home with them into the community, but I feel as though we had learned a lot more for them.

To be kind, to be caring and to never lose your drive to succeed.

it as interactive as possible, rather than just rattle off some facts, and it seemed quite effective. The rabies booklets (n = 50) sponsored by the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) came in handy, as the children found the activities quite exciting. We feel they also felt a sense

of achievement when they received the certificate after attending the presentation on rabies prevention.

We were then asked to speak to the grade 11s and Grade 12s about the veterinary career as an option. Some of



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:

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JINNAH PARK PRIMARY'S ADVENTURES WITH ELEPHANTS

Andrea Rössler, Jacques Malan, Walter Janse van Rensburg, Floris Machtelinx & Anneri Mouton (BVSc III)

The children learnt that elephants need to be treated with respect and looked after, just like their dogs at home.

On 18 July 2018, we had the opportunity to take learners from Jinnah Park Primary School to Adventures with Elephants in Bela Bela, Limpopo. Our primary aim as five veterinary science students on this excursion was to raise awareness and teach about rabies prevention. We were given an ideal environment to bring across the message of conservation and care for animals in the wild as well.

Global Alliance of Rabies Control (GARC), as well as the "Want a friend? Be a friend!" Rabies booklets (n = 15) they provided, gave us the necessary platform to approach the learners. By having one veterinary science student work through the rabies booklets with two to three school learners at a time, we were able to work on an individual level. Moreover, we covered topics such as the threat of rabies, dog bite prevention and animal behaviour.

"The Five Freedoms" also illustrated in the rabies booklets was used to address the responsibility we have to ensure our dogs at home are provided with food and water, shelter, healthcare, animal interaction and happiness. It was this concept that allowed us to connect the message with elephants (and other wildlife species) and how they are entitled to these elements. We were then later able to place emphasis on this message, by undertaking a litter clean-up drive with the learners at the end of the day. The clean-up campaign left Adventures with Elephants, our community partner, with a cleaner and safer home for their elephants.

We certainly enjoyed this opportunity to work with the school and community partner. We hope that we have made an impact, not only in these learners, but also in the community members through word-of-mouth as well as the rabies booklets that will further be a source of information when taken home. Of course, the highlight of the excursion was no other than to look upon the elephants themselves as they approached us. It was great to see the smiles and responses from the learners, as they were able to feed and touch these beautiful animals. It was truly a privilege to have had this experience and we are thankful to Adventures with Elephants.



OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A REAL LIFE ONE-HEALTH SITUATION

Dr Luke Arnot (Lecturer – Department of Production Animal Studies)

Three final-year Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) students namely Marcia Schempers, Sam Phillips and Keith Spargo and Dr Luke Arnot had the most amazing opportunity for the week in mid-July 2018, while doing a rotation through the Hluvukani Animal Health Clinic (HAHC).

We were informed that three people from three different households within the Welverdiend B area had been diagnosed with leptospirosis; one patient was still

hospitalised.

On Tuesday, 10 July, Prof Lucille Blumberg and Prof John Freaan from the National

Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), Dr Khanyisile Tshabalala (Public Health Medicine Registrar, School of Public Health, University of Witwatersrand) and



Prof Marinda Oosthuizen (Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases [DVT], University of Pretoria) arrived at Hans Hoheisen Wildlife Research Station (HHWRS) to conduct an investigation into the leptospirosis cluster in the residents of Welverdiend village.

Their aim was to try and collect samples from in-contact humans, household water samples, and blood samples from pets and livestock that were kept at the affected households. They asked whether the BVSc students and myself would be interested in assisting them to collect blood samples from the household dogs and livestock, and to trap any rodents from the affected houses. It seemed such an amazing opportunity for us to get working with individuals from other disciplines and team up each offering with our own skills and thoughts to try and understand how this cluster of cases occurred.

Once again, it proved to me what amazing learning opportunities Hluvukani continues to offer our veterinary students in so many different aspects of veterinary science. It is one of the few places where people, their pets and livestock and the surrounding

wildlife truly interact at a very intimate level. Hluvukani is such a brilliant example of a One-Health situation.

The NICD vehicles met the Onderstepoort (OP) staff and students at the HAHC at 09h00 each morning after we had completed our dip tank calls and any emergency livestock call outs within the community. From the clinic, we travelled to each affected household. Dr Christine Davis, the Compulsory Community Services (CCS) vet based at HHWRS was also roped into helping with the sample collections and issuing of veterinary permits. On arrival at each household, we had a brief discussion with the residents of the household. While the professors from NICD and DVTD were filling in questionnaires from the residents, collected blood samples from in-contact people and collecting water samples from household water storage bins, the veterinary students went about collecting serum samples from all household dogs and livestock.

The students also set up baited rodent traps both inside and outside the affected houses in the hope to catch rodents. During the rest of the week, the rodent traps were checked daily and trapped rodents collected. Dr Illana van Wyk also got involved by taking

serum blood samples from the household cattle when they were presented at the communal dip tank the following week.

It was an amazing experience getting the opportunity to participate in a real case scenario of an infectious disease outbreak within such a community to see first-hand how the professors from the NICD approach such an outbreak. Numerous informal discussions were held between the OP students and staff and the colleagues from the NICD which was very informative. Both parties mentioned more than once how amazing it was to work with people from the medical and veterinary fields in such a project, and certainly I and the BVSc students took away a lot from the experience. It seemed like a good example on how well such a "team" each with different skills and approaches can work together to gather the relevant information on such an important zoonotic outbreak.

On the Wednesday evening, Prof Bloomberg and Frean gave all of us a more formal, amazing talk around the campfire in the lapa at HHWRS on the epidemiology of zoonotic leptospirosis, how it affects humans, the different strains and clinical syndromes. Their knowledge and passion for what they do is contagious.



Prof Lucille Bloomberg and Prof Marinda Oosthuizen discussing the way forward with the vet students, Dr Davis and myself at one of the affected households during sample collecting

SUPERHEROES AND VILLAINS AT RAMAHLALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Photographs: Tamryn Hilton, Lavira Hunsriaj, Mamokone Sekgoka & Ockert van der Westhuizen (BVSC III)

Teneal Naidoo (BVSC III)

On 19 July 2018, our group consisting of five third-year veterinary science students in conjunction with Ramahlale Primary School, in Mamelodi, implemented the community engagement project for Veterinary Professional Life (VPL) 300. VPL 300 is a module presented to all third-year students at Onderstepoort Campus, University of Pretoria.

Our mission was to educate the Grade 4 learners with regard to rabies prevention and general animal welfare. We used the

Global Alliance of Rabies Control (GARC) booklets (n = 60) in our presentation to the learners. The booklets are very child-friendly with easy-to-understand illustrations and games.

Upon arrival at the school, we were received by enthusiastic teachers and excited learners. We had originally been requested to take 50 learners for our presentation during our initial visit to the school. However, we had to quickly adapt to the 100 learners that were presented to us on the day. Unwilling to disappoint our keen audience, our team of five introduced the learners to our very own characters, the Rabies Rangers and the evil villain Count Rabdo in hopes to provide a more fun-filled learning experience that would keep their attention as well as make it easier to impart our knowledge of rabies prevention to them.

With the enthralling antics of Count Rabdo and the Rabies Rangers, the learners were taught how to identify different moods in dogs using body language.

Moreover, learners were taught what to do when confronted with each situation, the physical signs of rabies as well as what to do if they get bitten by a dog. We used visual aids and interactive games to assess their knowledge of rabies and then corrected and helped the learners understand the importance of vaccinating their pets. Furthermore, we highlighted the five freedoms that all animals should receive. We concluded our presentation with a small feedback session where we divided the learners into four smaller groups and asked them to write down what they had learnt from our superheroes and villain that day.

Overall, I believe, our community engagement project with Ramahlale Primary School was a success. We are hopeful that we have instilled vital knowledge that will be shared within the community by the learners. We are thankful to have been given the opportunity to impart some of our knowledge to the learners and the community.



Superhero interacting with enthusiastic learners



The learners were eager to ask and answer questions

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AT BALEBOGENG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Andrea Lau, Bright Ntshweng, Kimona Harisanker, Stephan Stander & Rozaan Grobler (BVSc III)

As part of our third-year Veterinary Professional Life (VPL) 300 module, we had the opportunity to plan and implement our own community engagement project.

Among the topics covered in this module, rabies and its prevention featured prominently. We studied the challenges presented by rabies worldwide as well as how effectively the disease can be controlled through education of dog owners. As part of the VPL 300 module, we completed online courses in Rabies Education and Animal Handling and Vaccinating presented by the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC).

Armed with our newfound knowledge, we as a group of students started planning our next task, that is, raising awareness in a community about the threat posed by rabies. Moreover, we highlighted the importance of controlling the disease. Our community partner for the project was Balebogeng Primary School, in Mamelodi. We visited the school in March 2018 in order to meet Ms Grace Mkhize, the principal, and the Head of Department of the Foundation Phase. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and plan the implementation of our project with them. We decided that we would deliver a presentation on rabies and its prevention

to the three classes of Grade 3 learners. There were approximately 40 learners in each class.

One week before our implementation date, we travelled to the Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC) at the Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria. There we met with Dr Jeanne Rudman, who provided us with valuable insights into the people and animals in the community. We later learned the MAHC, called "Old vista" by the locals, was well known by the learners of the school. Many had taken their dogs there for veterinary care as well as for the free dipping programme.

In preparing our presentation, we discovered that it was quite challenging to find a way to present factual information about rabies without provoking unnecessary fear of dogs, especially given that our group of learners were between eight and nine years old. In the end, we came up with a presentation that covered the basic aspects of animal care, dog behaviour and body language, bite prevention and the basic concepts

of rabies prevention. We included animations, rhymes and interactive activities in order to make it fun for the learners and to keep them interested in the topic.

The next week, early on the morning of the 24 July we arrived at Balebogeng Primary dressed up in our lab coats and stethoscopes, ready to talk about rabies. Unfortunately (despite the fact that we had tested it the week before) we could not get the school's projector to work. Luckily, we had a contingency plan, that is, we had printed our presentation on A3 posters in case of technological troubles. We proceeded to present to each of the classes, with the help and encouragement of the wonderful, enthusiastic Grade 3 teachers.

After we had done our presentation, we spent some time with the learners in which they could ask questions and share their stories with us. One of the definite highlights of our project was seeing the learners, who were initially shy and reserved, get comfortable with us and

eagerly volunteer to share stories about their pets at home.

The University provided us with 120 of GARC's 'Want a friend? Be a friend!' rabies booklets, which we handed out to the learners after the presentation. The rabies booklets contain information and useful tips about handling dogs and preventing bites. There were certificates for the learners who attended the session. These

booklets help to create a wider awareness, as learners can take them home and show them to friends and family members. We also left a poster in each class with the contact details of the SPCA and the MAHC that learners can refer to in the future. We left our printed A3 sheets with the Deputy Principal, who was eager to laminate them and put them up around the school.

Overall, this community engagement

project was a great learning experience on many levels. It gave us valuable experience in collaborating with community partners, communicating vital information in the right way and working together as a team to overcome challenges and accomplish the ultimate goal. This experience helped us to gain insight into the importance of our role as future veterinarians in the unique setting of South African communities.

RABIES KILLS, BUT TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT RABIES SAVES LIVES

Suné Olivier (BVSc III)

"What, did you say 'Rabbits'?"

"No, silly, I said 'Rabies!' I think Dr Murphy is a little deaf, let's help him hear: Let us all say loud and clear: Rabies!"

The Grade 6 class of Ramoshie Primary School were laughing gleefully as they shouted "Rabies!" at the five silly "animal doctors", dressed in green overalls and gumboots with stethoscopes around their necks, standing in front of the classroom.

On 20 July 2018, Mark Reyneke, Danielle Montgomery, Mark-Anthony Murphy, Dieter Niebuhr and Suné Olivier, a group of veterinary students from the University of Pretoria, did more than just implement their community engagement project: They played a vital role in spreading the message about the deadly disease, rabies, to rural communities.

With the help of handy educational booklets (n = 60), sponsored by Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC), a plush dog toy and a sense of humour, these students taught this group of learners what rabies is. We also taught them how to prevent a dog bite and what to do if you do get bitten. Furthermore, we gave the learners certificates to show their parents, and hopefully tell them what they learnt as well.

It is clear that these lively "animal doctors" fascinated the learners. Hopefully what they learnt will not only help them intervene in a situation and prevent themselves or a loved one from getting rabies, but also perhaps inspire some of them to pursue a career in veterinary science in the future.



Awarding the learners with rabies certificates



Big smiles after learning all about rabies

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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



Visit the University of Pretoria Community Engagement Management System (CEMS) for updates about community project opportunities.