

Recipient of the 2020 Ricky Wilson Award

Dr Ian Herbst

The Ricky Wilson Award is a RuVASA award to a practicing rural veterinarian who has consistently, for more than 20 years, provided an excellent service to his/her clients and served as a model and inspiration for fellow rural practitioners.

The 2020 Award goes to Dr Ian Herbst who has since 1971 served the farmers in the Caledon and Bredasdorp areas of the Overberg and further afield.

Ian qualified from Onderstepoort in 1970 and joined Dr Ricky Wilson in practice in Caledon in 1971 where he and Ricky practiced in partnership for 27 years.

After Ricky's tragic death, Ian continued practicing in Caledon until 2014 after which he relocated to Hermanus. He retired from clinical practice but continued with his sheep consultancy practice with which he is still as busy as ever to this day – consulting to more than 40 flocks which includes a minimum of 2 visits per year or many more in some cases.

Ian has almost single-handedly changed the face of sheep farming in the Overberg. From sheep farming being the very poor brother to grain farming it has now arguably reached an equal footing thanks mainly to Ian's efforts and influence.

After attending a congress in Australia in 1983 on laparoscopic AI and scanning in sheep he was the first to start commercial scanning of sheep and regular flock visits in 1984.

During the next few years he expanded his flock work and presented a number of scanning courses for colleagues which culminated in a 3-day sheep management course in Caledon for more than 70 colleagues and the publication of the handbook 'K.I. en Reproduksie van Kleinvee'.

His flock visits (more than 60 flocks at one time), which included at least 2 or more visits per year, covered all aspects of sheep farming from choice of breed, nutrition, management, herd health, fertility and fecundity etc. Many of his flocks have gone from lambing percentages of 70% – 80% to well over 120%.

Not wishing for a minute to detract from Ian's encyclopedic knowledge of every aspect of sheep farming I believe his greatest gift is his ability to understand and communicate with farmers. I had the privilege of working with him for 5 years and I was constantly in awe of his communication skills with clients, especially farmers.

Ian has been sought after as a guest lecturer and his appearances include:

- International Sheep Congress at Massey University in New Zealand
- Congresses and Farmers' Days all over RSA and Namibia
- Small stock lectures to Onderstepoort undergraduate students

He has also served as external examiner in small stock and pasture management and mediator of exams at both MEDUNSA and Onderstepoort for undergraduate and MMed Vet students.

Ian has received many accolades and awards including:

- Agriculturist of the Year in the Western Cape in 1987
- SAVA Clinical Award in 1988
- Merino Breeders Association award for enhancement of the breed in 1989
- National Livestock Health and Production Group award for outstanding application and service in 1993
- National Wool Growers Association Silver Ram Award for years of unselfish and quality service to the NWGA and Wool industry

He has also served on numerous boards and committees including:

- Small Stock Health Advisory Body
- Committee for the control of Johnes Disease

Ian is outgoing, gregarious and fun-loving with a wonderfully naughty sense of humour.

His hobbies are bowls, cultivating Fuchsias and drinking red wine at which, speaking from personal experience, he is very proficient.

I believe Ian is a very deserving recipient of this award for his service not only to the veterinary profession but to the sheep industry and agriculture as a whole. He is a colleague of whom we can all be proud.

Having known the late Ricky Wilson quite well I am sure he would fully approve of this award (which bears his name) going to his longtime friend, colleague and partner.

Buzz Bowker