

#UPGraduation2022: Leader in veterinary science receives honorary doctorate from UP

Posted on **May 03, 2022**



Emeritus Professor Jacobus Andries Wynand (Koos) Coetzer

The University of Pretoria (UP) has conferred the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Science (*honoris causa*) on Emeritus Professor Jacobus Andries Wynand (Koos) Coetzer for his national and international scientific, teaching and learning contributions to the field of infectious and parasitic diseases of livestock and wildlife, as well as for his significant contribution to creating online tools that support education in his field of study.

“It is a tremendous honour to receive the degree,” Prof Coetzer said. “Onderstepoort campus at UP was a place where I was able to be myself and live out my passion.”

Prof Coetzer, who grew up in (formerly Lydenburg), obtained his BVSc degree in 1973, and attained specialist status in veterinary pathology by obtaining his M Med Vet (Path) degree, in 1982.

His scientific and academic career spanned almost 50 years at the Onderstepoort complex. During this time, Prof Coetzer occupied various senior positions at UP, including Head of the [Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases](#) (1994 to 2011) and Deputy Dean of Research, Postgraduate Studies and Internationalisation (2011 to 2014). Between 2001 and 2014, he was a part-time visiting professor in Tropical Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. Since his retirement in 2014, he has been an emeritus professor at [UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science](#).

Prof Coetzer has a significant national and, particularly, international profile. He is one of the world's foremost authorities in the field of infectious diseases of livestock and wildlife. In recognition of his high-quality research on infectious and parasitic diseases, in 1982, Prof Coetzer received the South African Veterinary Association's (SAVA) research award for outstanding research published in scientific journals. In 1997, he received a SAVA gold medal in recognition of his outstanding scientific achievements and promotion of veterinary science.

His research interests covered a wide range of diseases as well as plant poisonings and mycotoxicoses of livestock, including Rift Valley fever, Wesselsbron disease, lumpy skin disease, bovine theileriosis, geeldikkop and other hepatogenous photosensitivity conditions. The World Health

Organisation for Animal Health regards some of these diseases as high-impact or priority diseases because of the devastating socio-economic consequences they may have.



Emeritus Professor Jacobus Andries Wynand (Koos) Coetzer's scientific and academic career spanned almost 50 years at the Onderstepoort complex.

Between 2004 and 2006, Prof Coetzer led the Development of a Molecular Diagnostic Test Kit for Tick-Borne Pathogens project, which dealt with innovative solutions to diagnose and manage the increasing prevalence and negative impact of buffalo-derived theileriosis or Corridor disease in South Africa. These molecular diagnostic tests are used widely as they are recognised as being superior to other available tests.

In addition to these scientific endeavours, Prof Coetzer has a passion for online education, which resulted in the innovative offering of an online MSc in Veterinary Tropical Diseases as well as the online resource on animal health Anipedia, for which he has brought together the world's top researchers in the field of veterinary infectious diseases of livestock as contributors.

In 2007, UP awarded Prof Coetzer a Laureate Certificate for Education Innovation for the development of this primarily web-based MSc degree, and the Chancellor's Award for Teaching and Learning in 2008.

In addition to having several publications to his name, he was chief editor of the award-winning and internationally acclaimed textbook *Infectious Diseases of Livestock*, and co-author of *Plant Poisonings and Mycotoxicoses of Livestock in Southern Africa*.

Prof Coetzer has also established formal collaboration agreements with various international universities. "It was important to me that we come out of isolation after 1994," he said. "With all the new technologies and knowledge, we had to compete and broaden our expertise and gain access to outside funding. That is why I placed emphasis on the internationalisation of my department and the faculty, and set up memorandums of understanding with selected universities abroad – in Africa, Europe and the US – to broaden our perspective and experience."

As a result of his high national and international scientific standing, Prof Coetzer has been organiser/co-organiser and chair/convenor of several national and international conferences,

symposia and workshops, and a member of many editorial boards and scientific advisory committees/boards. Between 2007 and 2010, he was President of the Association of Institutes for Tropical Veterinary Medicine. He received a number of national and international honours and awards for his high-level performance and achievements in research, and teaching and learning.

Prof Coetzer remains passionate about online teaching and the development of audio-visual resources. “We need to build an updated teaching and learning online platform where all the invaluable audio-visual and other materials that we have developed and collected over more than a century at Onderstepoort can be made available to under- and postgraduate students.”

Published by Hlengiwe Mnguni