

UP Vet Books for Africa team returns from donation drive to Zimbabwe and Zambia

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Students from the Faculty of Veterinary Science undertook an 4 000km trip to Zimbabwe and Zambia to distribute boxes of veterinary textbooks, microscopes and veterinary supplies.

Eight students from the University of Pretoria (UP) **Faculty of Veterinary Science** students have completed the first leg of their 2022 donation drive as part of the MTB Petroleum Vet Books for Africa Society. During the winter recess, the group undertook an eventful 4000-kilometre trip from the UP Veterinary Science Faculty at Onderstepoort, outside Pretoria, to Zimbabwe and Zambia to deliver boxes of veterinary textbooks, microscopes, and loads of veterinary supplies to worthy recipients.

Vet Books for Africa, a non-profit student-driven society affiliated with UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science, was established in 1993. Under the banner "Vets on a mission", the society sets out to distribute textbooks, journals and other veterinary supplies and equipment to veterinary faculties and organisations in various African countries, while also giving participants the chance to lend a hand at veterinary clinics and conservation sanctuaries along the way.

Over the years 14 trips have been made, totalling more than 97 000 kilometres, with more than 2 600 books donated to six African universities.



Under the banner “Vets on a mission”, students from UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science recently set out to distribute textbooks, journals and other veterinary supplies and equipment to veterinary faculties and organisations in various African countries.

The 2022 team

Eight veterinary science students are part of the 2022 Vet Books for Africa committee: Le Roux Pepler (Chair), Marjon Schouwstra (Treasurer and Secretary), Marnus Zaaiman (Sponsors, books and equipment), Lara du Plessis (Sponsors, books and equipment), Daniel Archibald (Vice-chair, Routes and itinerary), Stian Wessels (Routes and itinerary), Jenna Lewis (Social media, websites and fundraising) and Christine Kruger (Social media, websites and fundraising).

Their first trip for the year took place from 30 June to 9 July 2022. In Zimbabwe their ports of call were the University of Zimbabwe and the Twala Trust animal sanctuary, and in Zambia they visited the University of Zambia, the Lilayi Elephant Nursery, and the Leopards Hill Veterinary Services clinic.

The team distributed five boxes filled with 60 veterinary science textbooks, 12 microscopes, four spay kits, cleaning materials, different kinds of surgical instruments, reels of chromic cat gut, bandages, dressing, disinfectant, and darting equipment. They also distributed 100kg of dog food.

“It was heartwarming to walk through the university libraries we visited and to note just how many of the books at veterinary science students’ disposal have over the years been by Vet Books for Africa,” said Pepler, a UP veterinary science student in his fourth year. One of his highlights was seeing the “absolute delight” of the veterinarians at Leopards Hill Veterinary Services in Lusaka when they received a box filled with veterinary supplies and a new microscope to replace the very old model they were using for diagnostic purposes.

In a voice note, Dr Lara Nicholson of Leopards Hill thanked the MTB Petroleum Vet Books for Africa team: “We have already put your donations to use. Every time we look through the microscope we will remember you, no doubt.”

The trip was, however, not all plain sailing. Among other challenges the team had to cope with the logistics of seeking medical attention and organising MRI scans in a foreign country, after one of the students suffered a serious back injury.

On behalf of the team, Pepler thanked everyone who hosted them along their journey, and those who helped across the entire campaign. “Our sponsors have also been wonderful. Without them, we simply would not have been able to do the work that we have been doing,” he said.

MBT Petroleum is the main sponsor and provided the team with vehicles as well as fuel for their trip. The trips are also made possible thanks to Montego, Global Supplies, Pneu-Dart, Wildlife Pharmaceuticals (All platinum sponsors), Hills (Gold sponsor), Elanco (Silver sponsor), Kyron Agri,

MSD Animal Health, SAVA, Molatek, Avimune (All bronze-plus sponsors), Acorn, Sanlam, OVK, Zoetis, Sapmok, HERD, Afrivet, NuPro Veevoere and Sky Information Supplies (All bronze sponsors).

The team is already hard at work planning the second leg of their trip, which will take place from 2 December 2022 to 9 January 2023.

“By splitting our donation drive into two trips, Vet Books for Africa will this year for the first time also be able to visit two countries that have not been visited by Vet Books for Africa in the past, Rwanda and Burundi,” Pepler explained. “During the second trip we will also be visiting universities and organisations in Malawi, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.”

During the course of the year, the committee members have not only had their sights set on endeavours across South Africa’s borders, but have volunteered at local non-profit organisations, including the Hoedspruit Elephant Rehabilitation and Development (HERD) Trust, and a rabies and veterinary awareness drive. Thanks to Montego, they were also able to distribute dog food in local communities.

At the Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre, they helped feed cheetahs, vultures and wild dogs. They also helped clean the vultures’ feeding area and the watering holes of the leopard and wild dogs being cared for.

In August the MBT Petroleum Vet Books for Africa team will be at the annual Skukuza Conservation Marathon in the Kruger National Park for awareness, and to raise funds for their December trip. Together with the Care for Wild Rhino Sanctuary near Barberton, Mpumalanga, the team will also volunteer at a local primary school.

For more information: www.vetbooksforafrica.org or <https://www.facebook.com/VetBooksForAfrica>

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