

UP's Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic: In service of care and competence

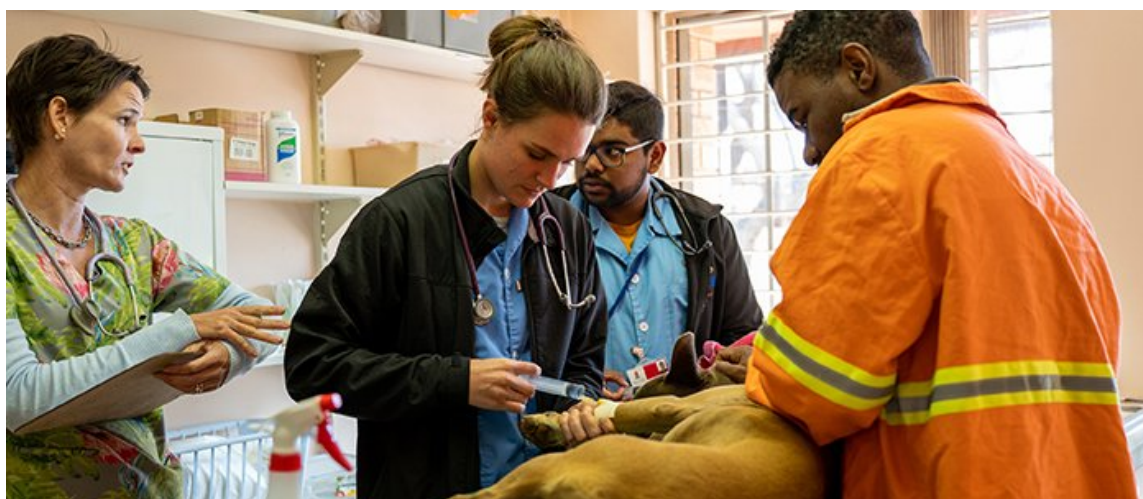
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Resident veterinarian Dr Jeanne Rudman (left) at the Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic which handles around 100 sterilisations, 500 vaccinations, and 400 other primary-care consultations in a month.

For more than a decade, the Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic has helped local residents to care for their pets. This primary care clinic on the [University of Pretoria's \(UP's\) Mamelodi Campus](#) is managed as a satellite of the [Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital](#) by the [UP Faculty of Veterinary Science](#). Valuable services such as vaccinations and sterilisations are provided under the ethos "It takes nothing from a human to be kind to an animal".

The clinic, which was set up in 2011 by Dr Cherri Liebenberg, forms part of UP's endeavours to provide services to communities situated around its campuses, as well as valuable hands-on clinical experience for its final-year Veterinary Science students.



Every week, Dr Jeanne Rudman (left) and her team welcome a new group of six final-year Veterinary Science students and one final-year Veterinary Nursing student from the Veterinary Science Faculty visit the Mamelodi Campus to help out at the clinic on a rotational basis.

The current resident veterinarian, Dr Jeanne Rudman, says the facility has over the past 11 years seen significant growth in the number of animals it cares for each month. She ascribes this to the level of service provided, the passion and enthusiasm of the visiting Veterinary Science students, and their rapport with community members and their pets.

Along the way the clinic has significantly raised awareness among community members about how to best care for their dogs and cats. "Through our vaccination programme we are helping to create a rabies-free Mamelodi. Many people are now also able to breed with dogs, because they can get their animals vaccinated or treated successfully if puppies for instance pick up the potentially deadly parvovirus," Dr Rudman says.

She tells the story of a UP student at the Mamelodi Campus who is self-funding his university studies by breeding Rottweiler dogs. "He says he had the courage to become a breeder because of the vaccinations for puppies and other help he can so easily access here at the clinic. He knows he has the clinic to fall back on."

Services

The clinic only does primary-care procedures, because it does not have facilities for overnight stays. Cases needing more intense care, such as X-rays and major operations, or medicine that it does not stock, are referred to other veterinary facilities. Demands for its services have grown steadily. In a month, the clinic handles around 100 sterilisations, 500 vaccinations, and 400 other primary-care consultations (including the stitching and treating of wounds, treating skin diseases, and cases of parvovirus).

On a typical day, clinic staff therefore see up to 20 walk-in clients with their dogs, cats, and even the odd goat or sheep, and provide 20 to 30 vaccinations and up to three sterilisations (by appointment only). Mondays and Fridays tend to be the busiest days, especially around payday. All procedures are done at cost at this non-profit clinic. A consultation costs R50, and diagnostic blood or faecal tests R10.

Dr Rudman's dream is to see the facility expand to house a separate unit dedicated to doing sterilisations.

Core team

Dr Rudman is one of only two permanent staff members at the clinic. She graduated from UP in 2004, and then worked at private practices in the UK and South Africa. She describes her seven-year stint at the Mamelodi Clinic as "by far the most fun and nicest experience" of her working life. For six of these years she has been assisted by the clinic's only other full-time staff member, Mr Valley Gomba. And since the beginning of 2022 the clinic has also enjoyed the services of a second qualified veterinarian, Dr Nicola Griffin, thanks to the national Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's community service programme for newly qualified vets.

Helping hands

Every week, a new group of six final-year Veterinary Science students and one final-year Veterinary Nursing student from the Veterinary Science Faculty visit the Mamelodi Campus to help out at the clinic on a rotational basis.

"Because we are so short-staffed, each extra pair of hands really makes all the difference. We therefore rely heavily on the students' help to provide the best possible primary-care service to our clients," Dr Rudman says.

She admires the passion and enthusiasm with which the students connect with their clients and the animals. "When they first get here they often feel as if they've been thrown in the deep end. It is beautiful to watch them grow throughout the course of a week. Our motto when working with the students is 'Competence, courage and confidence'. I like to believe that we give them the opportunity

to develop as such, and that they leave here with a greater sense of their skills, and of the knowledge that they already possess.”

The clinic helps students learn how valuable it is to do the basics right. “If they don’t, the animal they are treating will not heal.” They also get valuable ‘puppy therapy’, because so many young dogs are brought in for vaccinations. “And there’s simply nothing cuter than a puppy, is there?”

Awareness

Each year the clinic allows two BSc students from the Mamelodi Campus who are considering careers in veterinary science to job-shadow its activities. This year-long opportunity provides them with a greater sense of what working with animals (and their owners) is like.

In turn, UP Veterinary Nursing students visit local schools and local communities to create awareness of proper pet care, as part of their prescribed Nursing Professional Life module.

“They do wonderful work in raising awareness about the clinic’s services and the best way for people to care for their pets, while also preparing themselves for their future career in veterinary nursing.”

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