

In Memoriam

Walter Löwe: 1941 - 2024



Walter Manfred Herbert Löwe lost his fight against cancer on 28 August 2024 at the age of 82 – a mere 2 days before his 83rd birthday.

Walter was born in Pretoria on 30 August 1941. His mother was also from Pretoria while his father immigrated from Germany in 1932.

Walter attended the German primary school in Pretoria and finished his school career at the Pretoria Technical College where he received honours as fitter and turner – following in the footsteps of his father who was responsible for the erection of the blast furnaces at the then ISCOR in Pretoria. After school, he volunteered for training in the South African Airforce before commencing with his veterinary studies at the University of Pretoria where he qualified as a veterinarian in 1966.

After obtaining his BVSc, he immediately started his career as a state veterinarian in Pretoria – a post he occupied from 1966 to 1976. He had an extensive spectrum of responsibilities as a young state veterinarian: such as the riding school and dog training school of the South African Police; the National Zoological Garden in Pretoria and the health of animals at all the surrounding prisons and experimental farms. During this period he also had to manage an outbreak of foot and mouth disease at Komatipoort along the Kruger National Park; control an extensive outbreak of Newcastle disease; was involved in a campaign to control tsetse flies in the then Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and was overall responsible for disease control in the Caprivi in the north-eastern region of Namibia. He also featured on occasion on the front pages of newspapers after performing a life-saving surgical procedure on the famous parade horse, Fleur, of the South African Police. The operation was hailed as a success enabling Fleur to feature again at the following opening ceremony of Parliament in Cape Town.

In 1968 he met the love of his life, Dörte Kleyenstüber, from South West Africa (Namibia) while she was a student at the University of Pretoria. They got married in Swakopmund on 3 April 1970 and were blessed with 5 children (2 sons and 3 daughters) and 11 grandchildren.

Walter also obtained a post-graduate diploma in Veterinary Public Health from the University of Pretoria in 1975. It was no surprise that the potential of this young and energetic state veterinarian was noticed by his superiors and they deservedly promoted him to the post of regional director for veterinary services in the then Highveld region (now Northwest province) – the youngest state veterinarian at that stage to be promoted to this senior rank.

After 5 years in the Western Transvaal, he was appointed as regional director of veterinary services for the then Transvaal region (now Gauteng). His move back to Pretoria, now also offered Walter the opportunity, to assist his two brothers with the family piggery on their smallholding outside Pretoria.

On 1 October 1988, Walter was promoted to Deputy Director in the head office of Veterinary Services in Pretoria and in 1993 to Director of Veterinary Public Health. In 1995 he took the option of early retirement from Government service to give more dedicated attention to the family piggery.

In 2002 the Löwe family decided to abandon the pig farming activities as it was not an economic proposition anymore. At the same time, Walter was approached by the Director of Veterinary Services to do consultancy work for them – mainly to assist with compiling and negotiating import and export protocols for animals and animal products to and from the European Union. He did this for 5 years and then finally retired in 2008.

Walter left behind many monuments in his life and the South African Veterinary Services. As the regional director in both Northwest and Gauteng provinces, he succeeded in a remarkable way in gaining momentum for the execution of both the Bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Schemes. Not only did he achieve the buy-in and full support from the livestock industry and other stakeholders, but also the support and cooperation from private veterinarians.

He also compiled an excellent manual for the brucellosis scheme for use by veterinary and para-veterinary personnel. He managed to maintain for a number of years, the highest number of herds tested in the country for both diseases. He achieved this goal mainly because he had an excellent relationship with his veterinary and para-veterinary personnel, making him a much-liked and respected leader and colleague for whom they would walk the extra mile.

However, the most remarkable and lasting monument left by Walter was his love, affection and loyalty for his family whom he cherished and cared for with intense love – as a husband for Dörte, father for his children and grandfather.

A truly loyal and dear friend and colleague to remember and cherish in our thoughts.

Our heart goes out to Dörte and the family who cared for him with so much love during the last difficult 8 months of his life. We join them in thanking the Lord for the life of Walter Löwe.

Gideon Brückner