

New Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC) opens its doors to the public

By SJ

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The MAHC project was conceived a few years ago by Prof Gerry Swan, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science together with UP Mamelodi campus director, Mr Edwin Smith. The actual clinic premises were identified during a tour of the Mamelodi campus by Dr Henry Annandale, the Dean, Dr Roy Meintjies and Dr Liesel van der Merwe.

At the time of the tour, the premises were being used as sleeping quarters for security personnel; however Mr Smith kindly agreed to allow their conversion into a functional animal health clinic.

The conversion did not happen overnight and required much planning and negotiating as well as input and assistance from contractors based at Mamelodi as well as the OVAH. The building was converted into a clinic consisting of two consulting rooms, a small lab area, a general procedure room, a theatre; a change area; toilets and a small kitchen. A large room nearby was made available to serve as a day-ward.



Clinical equipment such as tables; a microscope; theatre lights; q-carts; desks; chairs; and cages was sourced from within the OVAH, and items that could not be made available were purchased new. Everything was stored temporarily in the OVAH and then moved down to Mamelodi at the beginning of February with the help of five willing animal caretakers and a rented removal truck.

The clinic opened its doors to the public on Monday 07 February 2011. It is positioned on campus just along from the Mae Jemison Reading Room which is a popular and beautifully maintained library designed to give school children access to science books. Many of the children were fascinated to learn of the existence of an animal clinic next door and some were very keen to be shown around.

Dr Cherri Liebenberg of the Faculty's Veterinary Hospital (OVAH) heads up the MAHC team, and a veterinary student and animal caretaker from the OVAH accompany her. Students rotate at

MAHC during the Outpatients session of their clinical year. The clinic currently operates from 09.00 to 14.30 weekdays in order to give the team time to drive back and forth from the OVAH.

The aim of the clinic is to supply Mamelodi residents with basic veterinary health care services such as vaccination, deworming, sterilisation, endo- and ectoparasite control and also to treat common diseases such as biliary (babesia). Minor procedures which require a general anaesthetic are also performed, but animals are not hospitalised overnight as there is currently no supervision available. There is no x-ray machine (yet) so animals requiring radiographs or any intensive or complicated procedures are directed to the OVAH. Dogs are currently dipped for free as an incentive to encourage Mamelodi residents to take their pets there for vaccination and treatment. All fees are modest and aimed at recovering basic costs.

Although it was slow to begin with, the clinic is becoming ever busier as news spreads by word of mouth. Flyers were produced to advertise the opening of the clinic and these were handed out at the main Hinterland/Hans Strydom robot just around the corner from the campus. Other advertising and marketing initiatives are planned, and in the coming months there will be an official opening to which local dignitaries as well as principals and staff of surrounding schools will be invited in order to formally introduce the MAHC to the community. Recently, a scant two months after opening, 30 dogs were seen in one day which confirms the belief that the MAHC is much needed and will, over time, play an important veterinary and educational role in the lives of local pet owners and the greater community. Apart from the benefit to the animals themselves, this will hopefully lead to a number of children being positively exposed to veterinary science and deciding to enrol in the BVSc or Dip Vet Nur programmes in future years.

