

New Poultry Disease Management Agency (PDMA) and UP Research Poultry Chair launched in the Faculty of Veterinary Science

By LT

Posted on 13 June 2013



Prof Celia Abolnik, first incumbent of the PDMA-UP Poultry Research Chair

The new PDMA-UP Poultry Research Chair in the Faculty of Veterinary Science was recently launched by the Faculty and the South African Poultry Association (SAPA). This exciting collaborative partnership aims among other things, at conducting research on poultry diseases that have an impact on our economy.

The first incumbent of this Chair, Prof Celia Abolnik, who was recently appointed by the Production Animal Studies Department, will be conducting research projects in conjunction with the Poultry Disease Management Agency (PDMA), the government as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Since the main aim of the Chair is to prevent and fight poultry diseases, Prof Abolnik has already sourced R7.9 million in funding for projects that will ensure efficient postgraduate student training in her unit, produce diagnostic tools to aid the fight against poultry diseases in the national flock and research outputs of a high international standard. Another exciting development is the upgrading of the Poultry BSL3 unit, another generous investment by SAPA that will enable studies on poultry diseases that have not been possible in South Africa before.

Working alongside Prof Abolnik as part of this collaboration, will be Dr Charlotte Nkuna, the Director of the PDMA, who will be responsible for disease reporting, giving technical support to farmers and positively forging relations between SAPA, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), the Faculty and other stakeholders.

The Honourable Mr Mlungisi Johnson, Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and the Guest speaker at the launch, emphasised the importance of this event, particularly referring to the dire diseases that the poultry industry and our country are currently facing. According to Mr Johnson, South Africa is definitely in desperate need of a well maintained budget, in order to effectively conduct research in the poultry industry. Poultry diseases have a major effect on our country's economic status.

Other guests from various organisations in the poultry industry who also attended the event included Dr Boikhutso Ntshabele of the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) as well as SAPA's, Dr Louis Theron. At the end of the formal programme, the guests were given a short tour of the newly opened research laboratory in the poultry section by Prof Abolnik.

Prof Pete Irons, Head of the Department of Production Animal Studies in the Faculty, was also present on the night. He was pleased with the timing of this launch and considers this a very beneficial tool to prevent and fight the alarming diseases the poultry industry is experiencing in South Africa.

Unlike some other countries in Africa, South Africa has the best food supply and yet, as citizens we are unaware about our immediate situation with regard to the many diseases the poultry industry is facing. Prof Gerry Swan, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, acknowledged the significance of this launch and emphasised the fact

that it is high time that all stakeholders involved in this industry, including Onderstepoort Biological Products (OBP) and the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI), unite to fight the diseases the country's poultry industry is facing.