

## New skills laboratory huge boost for clinical training in Faculty of Veterinary Science

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*Prof Johan Schoeman testing an ultra-sound procedure on one of the models*

As part of its continuing efforts to ensure that veterinary science students are able to perform clinical procedures, the University of Pretoria (UP) established a skills laboratory at the Faculty of Veterinary Science. It also forms part of the Faculty's strategy to adapt to an increase in student numbers. The laboratory was officially opened on 16 April 2015, but had already proved to be a huge asset to the Faculty with the first student practical that took place on 19 January.

Globally, veterinary clinical teaching has changed dramatically over the last couple of years. Increasing student numbers, limited availability of teaching animals and concern for animal welfare have led to the development of veterinary simulators and models that are used to teach students clinical skills.

The Reproduction Section in the Faculty's Department of Production Animal Studies uses the Breed'n Betsy simulator for bovine rectal examinations and artificial insemination. Students now have the chance to practise on both simulators and live animals.

The skills laboratory team is headed by Dr Annett Annandale and Dr Elrien Scheepers. Over the last few months they have been setting up stations, ordering equipment and simulators, writing instruction manuals, modifying soft toy dogs into models and creating models with the help of an artist, Ms Liezl Kok.



*Some of the simulators in the new Veterinary Science skills laboratory*

Some of the simulators that have already arrived are the Breed'n Betsies, a colic horse, a dystocia calf, Goldie (a heart and lung sound model), Emily (a radiographic simulator), a thoracocentesis model, Critical Care Fluffy, intubation and intravenous access models, as well as equine anatomical specimens. The team developed suture pads, a spay model, a fine needle aspiration model and a cystocentesis model.

A laboratory is also being set up for procedures such as blood smears, urinalysis, and haematocrit and semen evaluation. At first, the skills laboratory will enable students to perform more than 50 skills. However, it will be expanded to its full potential within the next two years and the first PhD project is currently being embarked upon – a starting point for a research focus in Veterinary Education in the Faculty. The Faculty plans to involve MSc students in skills laboratory research projects from 2016.

To eventually get into a sustainable production and commercial phase, the idea is to create employment opportunities for young South Africans to develop models within the scope of model production in the skills laboratory. As part of the laboratory's awareness campaign, a Skills Laboratory Open Day was held on 17 April, which allowed staff members and students to visit the laboratory and view the models on display.