

UP's Veterinary Science students star in new TV series

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Green Films have announced the licensing of the first season of the 13-part TV series *Frontier Vets* to SABC 3, South Africa. The first episode was aired on 9 July 2016 and the series will be shown weekly on Saturdays at 11:30, with repeat broadcasts on Thursdays at 09:30.

This reality/documentary TV series depicts the daily lives of six South African soon-to-be-qualified veterinary students from the University of Pretoria's [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#) at Onderstepoort, joined by two foreign students from the USA and Germany respectively, who take on the responsibility of running a rural animal clinic in a colourful community bordering the Kruger National Park.

Frontier Vets is a coming-of-age story about personal and professional growth. The South African students, Agatha, Charlotte, Jonathan, Delarey, Niven and Roxy, and American and German students Drew and Tina, come from very different backgrounds and are thrown in at the deep end. The series follows the trials they experience while learning to adapt to working together in a setting with limited resources.

The students work under the guidance of Dr Greg Simpson, also from the UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science, and their patients range from rhinos, lions and elephants to cute puppies, aggressive cattle and a mix of other animals. Since many of these patients make important contributions to their owners' livelihood, the young students have to diagnose their ailments and keep them alive while working under a lot of pressure.

This situation is fraught with challenges and is a steep learning curve for the students who find themselves far from sophisticated diagnostic equipment and have to use their hands and heads while negotiating the cultural and language gaps. At the same time they also need to learn how to deal with their colleagues from different backgrounds, and how to work together in harmony.

The Hluvukani Animal Clinic is a training and development initiative of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at UP. The goal is to provide veterinary students with opportunities to develop the skills and confidence they will need to function in the resource-limited settings that are found in many parts of South Africa. The [Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital \(OVAH\)](#) and the [Centre for Veterinary Wildlife Studies](#) developed and manage this training initiative and regard the experience gained there as being invaluable.

The students frequently have to seek the help of an interpreter while they learn how to interact with and show respect to people from different cultures and discover how the value and functions of animals, as well as people's beliefs about them, differ from what they have encountered in a commercial farming setting. The students see a wide variety of interesting clinical cases that they are highly unlikely to come across in Pretoria. They have to be innovative and work economically to help the animals and their owners, who cannot afford to pay for expensive treatments.

The production of the series would not have been possible without the support of the University of Pretoria, the Director: Clinical Services of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Dr Henry Annandale, and all the staff members who make the Hluvukani Animal Clinic rotations possible. The Mpumalanga State Veterinary Service has also been an important partner in the establishment of this unique training clinic.

Finally, the National Film and Video Foundation, the many funders, and the cast and crew have to be commended for their support in helping us to realise our dream of making this series.

Jonty Acton, the director, is delighted with the local broadcasting. Although the series has already been viewed internationally, the main reason for making it was to raise local awareness of veterinary science and animal husbandry by bringing it into our homes to entertain and educate South Africans.

Certain areas in South Africa are experiencing a desperate shortage of veterinarians and Dr Simpson hopes that the series will highlight the exciting and rewarding nature of the profession, and that it will inspire young people from all backgrounds to consider a career in this field.



Promo link: <https://vimeo.com/171712843>

More information can be found on the [Facebook page](#).

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