

VOLUME 3 • NO 1  
Winter 2003

# OP NEWS

## From the Desk of the Dean

**At times, we are inundated with bad news and we tend to nurture the negative experiences. This applies to many of the events in the Faculty during the course of the last few years.**

The effects of the amalgamation process are fading away and bread-and-butter issues have become the cause of disagreements.

I believe that during these times too, many good things have happened that in time will enhance the activities of the Faculty, and also the level at which they are conducted. The one major issue that I wish to highlight is that of research. The assessment report of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons in 1999 stated that the level of research at the Faculty is such that it would not be able to compete for funding in the system used in the United Kingdom. It also stated that the capacity of the laboratories in the Faculty are such that they could only sustain the low level of research that was taking place in the Faculty at that time. That was four years ago.

It is not easy to change these trends in research because it takes a long time to build capacity and to change a culture that has been in existence for many years. I am happy to say, though, that although there is still a long way to go, there are a number of indications that the tide has turned and that in another few years the outputs of this Faculty will be at a level where it will be competitive not just locally, but also internationally. In the field of molecular biology, four BRIC-BIOPAD contracts were awarded to the Faculty. This is a proud occasion because I do not believe that we would have been able to compete successfully for even one contract

two years ago. Similarly, there has been a marked increase in the number of registrations of postgraduate students who have become involved in research programmes in all the departments. Currently the increase is 56% more than the number of registrations last year. I think that we can look forward to seeing a substantial increase in the number of published articles and other research outputs during the course of the next few years.

These changes are evident because of the support of all members of the Faculty and identifiable activities in some of the focus areas in which researchers are involved. The trends will only be sustainable with your support; a word of thanks for that, in anticipation, of what is to be.

**Prof Nick Kriek,**  
*Dean*





# 3+4= VET

## Council approves 3 + 4 degree structure

Prof H M Terblanche, Deputy Dean

**A new degree structure for Veterinary Science was recently approved by the Council for Higher Education and has been implemented with effect from 2003.**

This structure requires a student wishing to follow a career as a veterinarian to first complete a specific three year BSc(Veterinary Biology) degree at the University of Pretoria before being eligible for admission to the new four year BVSc degree offered at Onderstepoort.

The first two years of the BSc(Veterinary Biology) degree have to be completed in the BSc(Biological Sciences) programme of the University of Pretoria. Based on their academic performance in the second year of study, approximately 140 students will be allowed to enrol for the third year of study in the BSc(Veterinary Biology) programme.

Although it may be preferable to complete the first year of study at the University of Pretoria, candidates may elect to complete the first year elsewhere. In this instance, the onus will be on the candidate to submit proof of the equivalence of courses completed in relation to content and scope with those offered in the first year of the BSc (Biological Sciences) programme of the University of Pretoria. Staff of the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences of the University of Pretoria will, on request, express an opinion on the suitability of such courses.

Application for admission to the BVSc degree programme will have to be made by the middle of the third year of the BSc(Veterinary Biology) programme. The selection procedure will include academic performance in the third year of study as well as a personal interview.

Students who are currently (2003) registered for a first year of study in a suitable programme will not be considered for admission in 2004. They are required to first complete the BSc(Veterinary Biology) degree and apply for admission to the new BVSc programme during the final year of the BSc(Veterinary Biology) programme.

There will be no new intake into the current BVSc degree programme for 2005. The next intake after 2004 will be for 2006 when the first graduates of the BSc(Veterinary Biology) programme will enter the new four-year BVSc programme.

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# Farewell Prof Brough

Prof Nick Kriek, Dean

**Prof Brough Coubrough has become part of our lives at Onderstepoort. At the end of February 2003 he retired from active service to the profession after a life committed to the advancement of the veterinary profession. All will remember him as a person with style and commitment.**

Of all the things that he has done, I will remember him in particular for three reasons. The first is the way in which he dealt with people and conducted his affairs - either as past president of the South African Veterinary Association and the South African Veterinary Council, or as past Dean of the Faculty. These were all positions that required tact and the ability to deal with people from all walks of life.

The second reason is the quality of the facilities at the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort. Anyone who has seen and walked through those facilities will appreciate that they compare well with the best in the world. In future, they will add to the quality of the training and research that will be done here, and they will always remind us of the foresight of developing the facilities in such a way that they will be able to sustain the quality training to which we have grown accustomed in South Africa.

The last reason for which he will be remembered is the stabilising role that he played during the amalgamation process of the two former faculties of veterinary science. He had the difficult task of steering the faculty through

the troubled waters caused by the amalgamation process, but did so in a way that added value to the process.

It is our wish that Brough and Pauline will be able to spend many peaceful years enjoying the beautiful views of the mountains and the sea at Plettenberg Bay where they have elected to retire. They can both look back at a job well done.



**Thank you Brough for your guidance, enthusiasm and the kind, 'humouristic' way in which you worked with me in the academic environment and as consulting editor of OPNews.**

**Ken Pettey,  
Editor, OPNews**

*At Prof Coubrough's farewell luncheon were, from left to right:  
Prof Flip Smit (former Vice-Chancellor and Principal, UP),  
Dr Colin Cameron (CEO of the SAVA), Prof Theuns Erasmus (former  
Vice-Principal, UP), Prof Kriek (Dean: Veterinary Sciences, UP),  
Mr Tom Krüger (Director: Finances, UP),  
Mr Nic Boshoff (Director: Facilities and Services, UP) and  
Prof Coubrough.*

# Library news

## Display in the library at OP

The latest display in the Academic Information Centre in the Arnold Theiler Building features the devastation caused by war, especially its effects on the environment and animal life. The remarkable book *Veterinary Medicine: an illustrated history* has a well documented section on Mesopotamia (Iraq) where the first civilisations flourished between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in about 3000 BC - and where the first animal doctors were to be found, as pointed out by the authors.

*Erica van der Westhuizen*

## Are you registered on the Infoportal?

The Infoportal is the academic portal of the UP portal. A wealth of information to support the lecturer's academic tasks and all sorts of nifty functions are awaiting you at <http://infoportal.up.ac.za>

### ***You're not "in" if you're not "on" the Infoportal!***

You'll need your e-mail address (the part before @op) and your own special e-mail password. Phone us for tips on this, if you've forgotten it:

Erica van der Westhuizen  
x8007

Antoinette Lourens x8008

Tertia Coetsee  
x8580

Demos will be given  
in the Computer  
Lab later this year.

# The OP experience – a student's perspective

**Dr Arnout Dekker, Utrecht**

On Saturday, 1 March, I arrived at Johannesburg International Airport. After months of planning, I was finally in Africa. My roommates in the Brucella annex student houses showed me around the campus and explained the rules of cricket to me, which was very important, considering that I was in South Africa during the World Cup.

## Clinical rotations

I started my first week of clinical rotations with the Production Animal Department. Mrs Marais, the international student officer, had first taken me to the Companion Animal Department, but as we receive two years of clinical rotations in the Netherlands, that was not what I wanted! In the first year we are educated about all the species, pathology, microbiology, etc. In the second year we can choose the species that we want to know more about.

The student group I joined was very nice and the lecturers were very friendly. Tick-borne diseases were new to me, as we do not have any major problems with ticks in the Netherlands. For me every patient in the clinic was an experience and ambulatory visits were like free tours through your beautiful country!

The second week I stayed at a private practice in Pretoria. The veterinarian whom I accompanied spoke Dutch. That was a big help for me, and as a result I learned to understand Afrikaans during this week as the vet translated specific words for me.

During the third week I did production animals again and the following week I started with a four-week rotation through the Herd Health Section.

I really enjoyed these weeks, as this is what I want to do after graduating. It was very good for me to see these different farm situations and to understand what the philosophy is behind these different methods of farming. After this experience I am able to compare different situations within farming and between similar farms in South Africa and the Netherlands. I think I can make a better evaluation for myself now about what is good or bad regarding a farming enterprise and, as a result, I will be a better vet in the future!

## Students and lecturers

The students all gave me the feeling that I was part of the Onderstepoort student body. What really differed from the approach in the Netherlands was that in South Africa the lecturers go with students on the farm visits. I think that is a big advantage, as they can teach students much more during these visits.

I want to thank all the students, lecturers and farmers for the time I had in South Africa. I would like to encourage all South African students to take the opportunity to travel overseas to experience different approaches to veterinary science and agriculture and meet interesting people. Remember there is a Memorandum of Understanding between Onderstepoort and Utrecht, so consider coming to the Netherlands!

# Joint venture improves animals' natural resistance

**Although cattle diseases can be partially controlled by the use of antimicrobials, pesticides, vaccines, isolation-and-quarantine, and test-and-slaughter policies, sustained losses due to infectious diseases continue to impede the livestock industry. For the past decade, the use of antimicrobials has been increasingly criticised because of the development of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens and the dangers of residues in animal products used as food for human consumption.**

An area of recurrent interest in this regard is to increase the overall resistance in a herd through selective breeding programmes using gene-based technologies. "Natural disease resistance" refers to the inherent capacity of an animal to resist disease when exposed to pathogens, without prior exposure or immunisation. Because antibiotics cannot effectively cure *bovine brucellosis*, it was decided to concentrate on the exploitation of natural resistance to control and eradicate the disease in South Africa. Natural resistance to *brucellosis* has been shown to increase dramatically with the selection and breeding of resistant animals.

A bovine gene has been identified that determines resistance/susceptibility to *bovine brucellosis* and tuberculosis. It was decided to employ a probe for this gene in South Africa to determine the prevalence of resistance in dairy cattle in an area with a high incidence of natural *brucellosis* in both brucella-infected and brucella-free herds. It is believed that by applying gene-based technologies to identify bovines with natural disease resistance, one can effectively reduce the incidence of *brucellosis* in cattle herds, providing new approaches to sustainable agriculture and safer pre-harvest foods.

The project will be a joint venture between the University of Pretoria, the University of Stellenbosch and the Texas A&M University, USA. Funding for the project was obtained from the Biopad Brick Trust. Prof Prozesky of the Department of Paraclinical Sciences will act as coordinator of the project.



## In Memoriam

**Johann Carstens passed away tragically on 16 November 2002. Prof Banie Penzhorn, acting head of the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, was asked to say a few words at the memorial service. After offering condolences to the family, he paid the following tribute to our late colleague and friend:**

*Johann was vir 20 jaar aan die Fakulteit Veeartsenykunde verbonde. Onmiddellik na voltooiing van sy opleiding aan die Technikon is hy in die destydse Departement Infeksiesiektes aangestel. Hoewel departementele bedelings verander het, het Johann steeds voortgegaan met sy werk in die bakteriologielaboratorium. Dit is hier waar ons hom leer ken en waardeer het vir die deeglike, noukeurige wyse waarop hy sy pligte nagekom het. Hy was ook altyd besonder lojaal teenoor die Departement en die Fakulteit. Ons het Johann verder leer ken as stil, diep, kunssinnige mens. Hy was in die ware sin van die woord "A Gentle Man", en dit is hoe ons hom sal onthou. Ons vind berusting in die wete dat Johann nou rus gevind het. Ons eer sy nagedagtenis.*

## News from Paraclinical Sciences

**Prof Kobus Eloff of the Phytomedicine Laboratory of the Department of Paraclinical Sciences has recently been awarded the Havenga prize for Biological Sciences for 2003 by the "Raad van die Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns.**

The Havenga prize is an annual prestigious prize awarded for original research in natural sciences and/or a technical field. The prize can only be awarded once to a person.

Prof Gerry Swan has recently been appointed as an expert FAO member of the Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee of Food Additives (JECFA) dealing with residues of veterinary drugs in foods. The committee is responsible for establishing maximum residue limits of veterinary drugs in animal products that are applied internationally. Prof Swan serves in his personal capacity for a term of office up to 31 August 2006. He recently attended the 60th meeting of JECFA in Geneva.

## Vets workshop in Tanzania

**Profs Kriek, Swan and Botha and Dr Myburgh were invited to attend the 2nd annual Norwegian Council for Higher Education's Programme for Development, Research and Education (NUFU) meeting and workshop from 14 to 18 January 2003 which was hosted by the Sokoine University of Agriculture in Morogoro, Tanzania.**

*From left to right:  
Prof Kriek,  
Dr Myburgh and  
Prof Botha*



*Prof Kriek addresses  
the delegates*

This NUFU-sponsored programme is a collaborative research project in environmental toxicology and zoonotic diseases: a south-north veterinary network. The overall aims of the project are to build veterinary competence in the control of zoonotic diseases in particular brucellosis and tuberculosis, and environmental pollution in aquatic ecosystems in southern and eastern Africa, through research collaboration and PhD postgraduate training. During the meeting the participants reported on their progress during the previous year and identified objectives for 2003.

The environmental toxicology programme will focus on the use of biomarkers in barbel (sharp tooth catfish or *Clarias gariepinus*) and other organisms as an indication of pollution in selected aquatic ecosystems in Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.



# Small-scale dairy farmers need assistance

Prof Cheryl McCrindle

**The Faculty of Veterinary Science will play an important part in assisting small-scale dairy farmers in the North-West Province to improve their productivity and profitability. The project will run over five years and involves a participatory appraisal phase to determine the current situation, an economic survey and an implementation phase.**

A majority of the farmers in the Small-Scale Dairy Project have received land or grants through the Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development subprogramme of the Land Redistribution Programme of the departments of Agriculture and of Land Affairs. Dairy farming has been prioritised as a means of achieving both food security and sustainable livelihoods in the North-West Province. Mr Julius Sebei, who was awarded an MSc in Veterinary Science at the end of last year, interviewed small-scale dairy farmers over a three-day period in November. It was found that their first priority was for training. Serious deficiencies were found in management, recordkeeping, nutrition and milk hygiene.

Three postgraduate students have been registered in the Section of Veterinary Public Health to research the ways in which profitability and productivity, as well as milk hygiene, can be improved. Research and training will be facilitated through the Department of Paraclinical Sciences, under the leadership of Prof Leon Prozesky, who is the project coordinator. Other departments of the Faculty, at main campus as well as the dairy industry, have been approached for collaboration in this project.



*Mr Nguduza, with the donkey cart he uses to deliver milk to a nearby settlement area.*

## **Viva ama-Bokke Bokke**

The Eighth International Conference on Goats 2004 will take place in Pretoria, from 4 to 9 July 2004. This event will be held under the auspices of the International Goat Association in collaboration with the South African Society for Animal Science and the University of Pretoria. There will be at least two pre-conference tours: one to the Eastern Cape to look at the Angora goat and mohair industry and one to the Northern Cape to look at the boer goat industry.

For further details, please visit the website at [www.icgsa.co.za](http://www.icgsa.co.za) or contact the secretary, Ms Carina Visser at [icgsa@postino.up.ac.za](mailto:icgsa@postino.up.ac.za), tel (012) 420-6029.

An online registration facility is available on the website. We would also encourage you to visit the goat webpage set up on: [www.up.ac.za/asservices/ais/vet/goatweb.html](http://www.up.ac.za/asservices/ais/vet/goatweb.html).

Prof Ned Donkin coordinates the South African Small Ruminant Network (SA-SRNET). Find out how to be part of this network by visiting the goat webpage, or contact him at: [ndonkin@op.up.ac.za](mailto:ndonkin@op.up.ac.za).

## The Class of 1924

The concept of having a local faculty of Veterinary Science appears to have arisen independently in the minds of several influential people early in the 20th century as it became clear that uniquely African diseases were not being adequately catered for by the existing European facilities to which aspiring veterinarians of necessity had to go for training purposes.

*The first BVSc graduates at Onderstepoort in 1924 (front from left to right): JI Quin, M Bergh, Prof Sir Arnold Theiler, JG Williams, C von Eberhardt Maré; (back): WJB Green, JHR Bisschop, G Martinaglia and PC Snyman*

## Eight pio

**No one promoted the concept of a local faculty of Veterinary Science more vigorously and determinedly than Sir Arnold Theiler, the first Director of Veterinary Research of the newly created Union of South Africa.**

His excellent personal relationship with the most eminent politician of the time - General Louis Botha, the first Prime Minister of the Union - led to the appointment in 1919 of a committee to investigate the advisability of having a School of Veterinary Science. The decision to create a veterinary faculty at Onderstepoort under the auspices of the Transvaal University College (TUC), in its turn under the aegis of the University of South Africa (Stellenbosch had also been a candidate) had virtually been taken when Botha died from a heart attack on 27 August 1919. Theiler's relationship with Botha's successor, General Jan Christiaan Smuts was more formal, but the latter confirmed the decision of creating the faculty when he offered Theiler the joint appointment of being its dean as well as the Director of Veterinary Research in 1919.

The TUC's Onderstepoort Veterinary Faculty came into being on 1 April 1920, as an integral part of the Veterinary Research Institute, served by veterinary researchers who had dual functions to perform: research and teaching. The initial teaching staff included eminent veterinary scientists such as PJ du Toit - who eventually succeeded Theiler - and Du Toit's successor, Gilles de Kock. Oom Flippie Fourie, a later dean, joined the ranks in 1922.

Considerable expansion of the infrastructure at Onderstepoort, mainly to accommodate the new students, took place in the early 1920s. The Biochemistry wing of the main building, the Pathology Building, the hospital block and a students' hostel were erected.

It is worth noting that the pioneering seven students only arrived at the Onderstepoort campus for the specialised courses in Veterinary Science when the new term opened in 1922. They were then in their third year, having completed their first year in 1920 at a university of their choice that provided the required basic courses, and their second year in 1921 at either the TUC or the Johannesburg University College, both of which offered the required courses in Veterinary Anatomy, Physiology and Biochemistry at the time. This ruling only changed in 1926 when the second year was moved to Onderstepoort.

As can be seen in the accompanying photograph, eight students qualified as veterinarians in 1924. Having started off as seven, it is not clear exactly when the eighth student, Giovanni Martinaglia, joined them. He was





# neer vets made the grade in '24

Dr R D Bigalke: Veterinary History Committee of the SAVA

apparently an orphan who had spent his early years in the Abraham Kriel orphanage in Langlaagte. After winning 'seven hundred pounds' in a sweepstake, he proceeded first to the University of Toronto (Canada), where he obtained a BVSc degree in 1919, and then to America's Cornell University for an MSc degree in 1920. He then returned to South Africa in 1922, presumably joining the third-year class. After qualifying at Onderstepoort he served as veterinary research officer under Sir Arnold Theiler, first at the Allerton Laboratory and then at Onderstepoort. In 1929 he obtained a DVSc degree from the University of Toronto. He was appointed municipal veterinarian to the Johannesburg abattoir in 1930, ending his pre-retirement career in public health as director of the abattoir. He died at the age of 79 in 1967.

Perhaps the greatest achiever of the 1924 class was JI Quin, known later as 'Pinky' to his students. He was the first Onderstepoort BVSc graduate to qualify with honours. He also obtained a DVSc degree (cum laude) in 1928. Like the rest of his classmates, he immediately joined the government service, spending the rest of his career at Onderstepoort. He became professor of Physiology in 1934 (all faculty posts were part-time appointments in those days) and did excellent research on photosensitivity, especially on geeldikkop. In April 1949 he was appointed Director of Veterinary Services and Dean of the Veterinary Faculty at Onderstepoort, but died of a heart attack within a year at the age of only 50 in March 1950. This happened during a train journey while on an official trip.

Probably even better known was 'Baas' (John Henri Roosegaarde) Bisschop. Students encountered this colourful character as a teacher (professor from 1936) in Zoötechnics from 1930 to 1962 when he retired. He was a specialist in animal breeding, having obtained a BSc (Agric) degree prior to his BVSc studies at Onderstepoort. He was also involved in many advisory activities concerning indigenous livestock in particular, both locally and in the neighbouring states. Particularly noteworthy was his membership of the well known 'Tomlinson

Commission', whose recommendations, had they been followed, could have changed the course of South Africa for the better as early as 1955. He died at the age of 85 in 1984.

Both Flip Snyman and Hardy Williams joined the Division of Veterinary Services in 1925, serving as government veterinary officers at various places in South Africa. Snyman also spent several years at Onderstepoort and obtained a DVSc degree for his thesis on rabies research in 1940. Both ended their pre-retirement careers as Director of Field Services - Snyman from 1946 until his retirement in 1959 and Williams from 1959 to 1960 when he retired. Snyman died in 1971 at the age of 72, whereas Williams was destined to outlive all his classmates by several years, dying in 1989 at the ripe old age of 89.

Mike Bergh was brother of the well known Springbok rugby player Ferdie Bergh. He spent his entire career in the Division of Veterinary Services, for example, as state veterinarian at various localities such as Piet Retief and Louis Trichardt during the East Coast fever eradication campaign. One of his claims to fame is that he did not hesitate to prosecute a Minister of Agriculture, whilst at Piet Retief, for failing to dip some heifers. Bergh's last position before he retired from government service was in Johannesburg.

WJB Green was appointed veterinary research officer at Onderstepoort in 1925 and also spent part of his career at the Allerton Laboratory. However, he had a serious heart problem and died in 1936 at the youthful age of 35.

After a few months at Onderstepoort, where he was replaced by Bisschop, Carl von Eberhardt Maré spent virtually his entire career in the Division of Veterinary Services as state veterinarian, especially in Mafeking. Maré died in Mafeking in 1974 at the age of 80.

Suitably capped and gowned, as is clear from the photograph, Sir Arnold Theiler officiated as dean at the graduation ceremony of his first students. Less well known is that he lectured to them in Pathology. The burden must however have been borne to a considerable extent by other staff members, such as Prof Gilles de Kock and others, because Theiler spent a good deal of the first four years of the faculty's existence on various overseas visits.

Theiler was to officiate at only one more graduation ceremony, as will be outlined in the following issue of *OP News*.



## Iams SA hosts Feline Symposium roadshow

**March 2003 proved to be a highlight in the annual symposium event calendar with Iams SA hosting no less than five top quality international and local speakers in a Feline Symposium.**

The symposiums introduced a wide variety of interesting feline topics to audiences at venues such as the Riverside Hotel Durban, The Vineyard, Cape Town and Gallagher Estate in Johannesburg. The *crème de la crème* of venues was the full-day symposium held at the Zambesi Sun in Zambia, where 87 selected delegates were flown up for a long weekend filled with a good balance of tropical fun and intensive learning.

### **Limited Offer – Iams Feline Symposium proceedings available**

If you were unable to attend one of the feline symposiums, please note that limited stocks of comprehensive proceedings featuring the full range of 11 talks given during the month of March are available through the National Clinicians Group for a nominal fee of R60 (this includes administration and postage).

All proceeds will go to the National Clinicians Group, courtesy of Iams South Africa.

To order a proceedings book, please contact Eileen Thomas at (031) 916-2602.

*Guests at the symposium:  
Dr Sven Aarp and Dr Liesel van der Merwe.*

### **Iams newsflash**

Iams cat food\* now includes dental care

Currently around 75% of cats experience dental problems by the age of just three. However, preventative dental care delivered from a very young age to cats could avoid many of these problems. Iams with dental care, available in all adult and senior Iams cat products\*, is now filtering into the South African market.

For more information contact Wendy Fisher or Dr Sarah Miller at Iams South Africa on the tollfree number 0800 00 4267 or via email: [customercare@iams.com](mailto:customercare@iams.com)

### **Announcement - Iams Best of Class in Nutrition 2004 is open**

This is a reminder that the Iams Best of Class in Nutrition is already running for 2004. The 2003 winner has been selected and will be announced at the 2nd year annual ball and published in the next edition of *OPNews*. For more details speak to your Iams student representatives on campus - Peter How or Graeme Harman BVSc V.



# Research teamwork in the Afrotropical region

Prof Moritz van Vuuren

**On 29 January 2003, several vets and veterinary scientists from academic and research institutions in South Africa, Belgium, the Netherlands and Norway gathered at Onderstepoort to discuss future collaboration.**

The participants represented the faculties/schools of Veterinary Science of the universities of Pretoria, Utrecht and Oslo, the Prince Leopold Institute for Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium, the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute and private industries. The workshop was facilitated by Mr Deon Herbst and Amelia Kleynhans of Business Enterprises at UP (Pty) Ltd. The discussions focused on the potential for joint ventures on research and postgraduate training, and explored whether mutual goals and interests were sufficient to underpin such collaboration or partnerships. Consideration was also given to the outputs that may emanate from joint research projects, particularly in terms of the training of postgraduate students. Finally, the participants considered pitfalls that may be obstacles to collaboration; and management structures that could support collaboration.

The impetus for the workshop had its origin in the current Memorandum of Understanding between the faculties of Veterinary Science of the universities of Pretoria and Utrecht, and the new five-year agreement for collaboration between the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases and the Veterinary Department of the Prince Leopold Institute for Tropical Medicine in Belgium.

The workshop included a social function that was held in the late afternoon of the preceding day to afford all participants the opportunity to meet each other informally and explore mutual interests and goals. The entire overseas contingent accompanied by a few local colleagues also travelled to the Kruger National Park the day after the workshop to gather their thoughts for a few days, and where they were apparently well supported by the cooking skills of the dean, Prof Kriek, and entertainment provided late into the night by Prof Koos Coetzer.



*Group photo of course participants*

## International students graduate from OP

By improving selection criteria, through regular communication between students and supervisors and by using a focused research approach, the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases has experienced a significant growth in student numbers from all over the world. This year eight postgraduate students from different countries completed their degrees. Dr Jannie Crafford (with distinction) and Dr Assefa Regassa (Ethiopia) obtained their MSc degrees at the March graduation ceremony. Another six of the 19 students currently registered for postgraduate studies will obtain their degrees at the November ceremony. These include Dr Prudence Kabongo (MSc); Ms Hanri Nel (MSc); Dr Silheshi Mekonnen from Ethiopia (MSc – with distinction); Dr Mirjam Tønnesen from Norway (MSc – with distinction); Ms Oumou Sangare from Mali (PhD); and Ms Leah Ndungu from Kenya (PhD).

# Achievements in Veterinary Tropical Diseases

**Prof Frans Jongejan, who is stationed at the University of Utrecht, Netherlands, is also an Extraordinary Professor in the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases at UP. He has been involved in several activities of interest:**

- A practical workshop was organised at the University of Pretoria with the aim of introducing molecular characterisation techniques based on reverse line blot hybridization (RLB). The workshop was supported by the ICTTD-2 (EU) project and took place in November 2000 with 12 national and international participants.
- A veterinary student project concerning the molecular characterisation of *Theileria* parasites in the African buffalo utilising the RLB lasted seven months and was carried out during 2000.
- A postdoctoral research assistant position for two years (1 February 2002 to 1 February 2004) was created at UP and filled by Dr Visva Pillay, through the Biochip project. This project was approved in 2001 by the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Netherlands to work on macro- and micro-arrays for molecular detection and characterisation of haemoparasites in African wild and domestic ruminants in collaboration with Isogen in the Netherlands.
- The Animal Health Programme of DFID (UK) awarded a two-year research project (127 000 English pounds) from March 2001 to March 2003 to investigate Cerebral Theileriosis in cattle in Northern Tanzania. The molecular testing is carried out by Dr Visva Pillay at UP, whereas the fieldwork is carried out in Tanzania by Lieve Lynen, who is registered for a PhD. Recently, DFID committed a further 20 000 pounds (32 000 Euros) to allow for an extension of the project until April 2004 to continue with the field work and to use the molecular test capacity created at UP.
- Molecular characterisation of blood parasites collected from fatal cases of babesiosis in the black rhinoceros in South Africa and Tanzania has resulted in a joint paper describing two new species, *Babesia bicornis* and *Theileria bicornis*. The paper has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Clinical Microbiology*.
- Tshepo Matjila (PhD student) was awarded a Utrecht Scholarship to stay in the Netherlands for nine months in 2002 and he has discovered that *Babesia vogeli* occurs in domestic dogs in South Africa.
- A second postdoctoral research assistant position has been created for one year (from January to December 2003) at UP and filled by Dr Marinda Oosthuizen. Her work will concern the development of cloned plasmid and extraction controls for *Theileria* parasites in order to quantify current molecular tests. Moreover, available recombinant *Theileria* antigens will be expressed and incorporated into a dipstick antibody detection format to be used in conjunction with molecular (RLB) tests.
- The World Programme of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) in Heidelberg has awarded 25 000 euro to organise a practical course on macro- and micro-array technology that will take place between 27 October and 7 November 2003 with 18 international participants and selected national and international speakers.
- Finally, a proposal concerning the commercial exploitation of the molecular tests has been submitted to BIOPAD South Africa and has been approved. A total of 2,5 million rand has been allocated to the project.

## OP Repro's get European College thumbs-up

**The European College of Animal Reproduction (ECAR) has approved the Section of Reproduction in the Department of Production Animal Studies as a training institution for residencies in small animal, farm animal and equine reproduction and reproductive biotechnology.**

This status was attained by virtue of the presence of three ECAR diplomates and founding members, David Gerber, Johan Nöthling and Henk Bertschinger (no longer in the Section, but still participating in postgraduate training) as well as two American College of Theriogenology diplomates, David Gerber and Pete Irons.

Case loads in the various species and physical facilities are also considered in ECAR's evaluation of institutions. Onderstepoort's case was strengthened by the visit of ECAR board member Bert van der Weijden of Utrecht University as an external examiner for previous clinical assistants Rachel Shuttleworth and Claudia Cordel.

The Section is now in a strong position to attract trainees seeking an international specialist qualification in Reproduction. Frans Jooste, the Section's outgoing clinical assistant, is the first graduate of the Reproduction Programme who will benefit when he sits the ECAR certifying examination in November.

This status confirms the position of Onderstepoort's Repro's as being locally relevant yet internationally competitive, as if proof was needed!

*Clinicians in the lion AI programme relax after another attempted insemination, one of the procedures which trainees in the ECAR-approved reproduction residency programme must master. Team members are Johan Nöthling, Henk Bertschinger, David Gerber and Pete Irons.*



*From left to right: Dr Quixi Sonntag (part time-lecturer, VPH), Prof Toni Eames, Prof Ed Eames, Mr Julius Sebei (research assistant, VPH), Dr Helen Zulch (senior lecturer, Companion Animal Studies). In front are the two guide dogs, Echo and Escort. The visit to South Africa by the Eames and their guide dogs was sponsored by Hills pet foods.*

## The Eames visit OP

On Monday, 7 April, Profs Ed and Toni Eames visited Onderstepoort at the invitation of the Section of Veterinary Public Health (VPH) and the Animal Behaviour and Interaction Group of the SAVA. Prof Tubby Veary, head of the section, is also the chairperson of this SAVA group. The role of animals in human health is an important aspect of Veterinary Public Health. Their presentation on the role of the veterinary and paraveterinary profession in the wellbeing of the disabled and their assistance dogs was attended by a large number of staff and students, as well as Dr Guy Fyvie from Hills pet foods.

## Phytomedicine now a part of Paraclinical Studies

From the beginning of 2002, the Phytomedicine group of the Department of Botany, Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, has been actively carrying out research in the Department of Paraclinical Studies in the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

The group's main field of expertise is the chemical analysis, testing of bioactivity (anti-bacterial, antifungal, antioxidant) as well as extraction and isolation of the bioactive compounds in plants. The group involves one contract appointee, Kobus Eloff, a postdoctoral fellow, David Katerere, and several MSc and PhD students. Because there was not sufficient space for this large group on the main campus, the old feed analysis laboratory in the Ethology Section at Onderstepoort was used to accommodate the group. The Department of Anatomy and Physiology was kind enough to make an office available during 2002.

An additional laboratory and an office are now in use in the Pharmacology/Toxicology section as well.

Now that the future of the group is more secure, the number of postgraduate students has increased to 10 MSc and nine PhD students with five more applications in the pipeline. Several of these students are regis-

tered in other UP faculties or even at other universities and extensive use is made of co-promoters. The group presented nine oral and two poster presentations at an international conference at the beginning of the year.

Thus far the projects were in the following broad areas: quality control of herbal medicines, isolating antibacterial compounds from *Combretaceae* and the development of plant extraction processes and ethnoveterinary medicine. The focus is now more on anti-oxidant and antifungal activity as well as testing the commercial value of products for *in vitro* and *in vivo* systems.

NRF, THRIP, Biomox Pharmaceuticals and Bioextracts fund the research. Recently Biopad funding of more than R3 million was obtained to fund a project to replace antibiotic feed additives with plant extracts in poultry.

Co-operation with other faculty members and private practitioners is welcomed. A list of projects will soon be available on the Paraclinical Studies website.

## Vets give dog a new lease on life

**A seven-year old boxer was given a new lease on life when brain surgery was performed on him to remove a brain tumour.**

This unique, three-hour operation, believed to be the first in Africa, took place when Jakkals was found to be experiencing severe seizures not responsive to medication. A brain tumour was diagnosed on a magnetic resonance scan (MRI) performed at the Les Marais MR Institute.

Dr Percy Bezuidenhout (neurosurgeon) from the Pretoria Academic Hospital performed the surgery, assisted by staff of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Dr Neels du Plessis (general surgeon) and Sr Hildegarde Mentz (theatre sister). Veterinary specialist anaesthetist, Dr Kenneth Joubert, was responsible for the anaesthetic during the surgery. He also assisted Dr Ninette Keller (internal medicine) in providing intensive care for the patient in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) after the surgery.

# Dean's Cultural Evening

Sara Fannin & Rhett Kenmuir

One of the highlights of 2003 is certainly the first-ever cultural concert held by veterinary students. The Dean, Prof Nick Kriek, has for some time expressed the desire for an evening in which students could display those talents that are unrelated to their academic talents. He also sponsored a large portion of the costs involved.

This delightful event took place at the Groenkloof Campus on 14 March and included song, dance, music and drama. Some of the more memorable items included the 4th year student drama, *Almost Shakespeare - A surgeon's tail*, Morton Mashishi's excellent display of Latin American and classical ballroom dancing, and Onderstepoort's very own "Serrie groep", which will be performing on the main campus for the first time in July. The Pretoria Boys' High School Dixie Band and the Parktown Drum Corps also took part.

Plans are already under way for next year's cultural evening, which will hopefully become an annual event.

*From left to right: Hestia Greyling, Claude Deyzel and Prof Kriek on the stage at the beginning of the evening.*

*The smiles on the faces of these players bear testimony to the effect that the game of golf has on the collective psyche of a group of golfers.*



*Anisha Singh.*



## Staff-student golf competition

**After a lull of nearly two years, Onderstepoort students and staff competed against each other on 27 November 2002 at the Pretoria Golf Club in Pretoria West.**

At stake was a floating trophy as well as a host of super prizes generously provided by Pfizer, Merial and Pharmacia through the kind courtesy of Drs Jan Wentzel, Arthur Wellington and Charles Costello respectively. After a gruelling 18 holes, the students succeeded in narrowly beating their older opponents. The best individual player was Alan Ball. Dr Mervyn Campbell drove the ball the furthest, while the two players who hit their balls closest to the pin were Stephen Rabie and Murray Stokoe. Thanks to the financial support of the Dean for encouraging the good relations between staff and students that are so vital for the Faculty. A great day of fellowship was had by all.



# Lecturer scores in 2003 Cricket World Cup

Genetics lecturer, Heleen Els, started with cricket scoring in 1996. Her favourite teams are (at club level) Adelaars, (at provincial level) Nashua Titans, and (at national level) South Africa. To date she has scored 20 international test matches and 45 ODIs.

She has been a member of the executive committee of the Northerns Cricket Scorers Association since 1999 and holds the portfolio of training.

During the 2003 ICC Cricket World Cup she was one of only eight scorers in the squad. Four of the eight scorers are in one way or another linked to the University of Pretoria, either as employees or as students. Heleen scored in all the games played at SuperSport Park during the World Cup, including three lead-up games where the Northerns Titans played against Namibia, Canada and Australia. The World Cup games included Australia vs India, West Indies vs Canada, Pakistan vs India and, in the Super Six rounds, Australia vs Sri-Lanka and India vs New Zealand.

What an experience!

## Just in case • Emergency numbers

• Security Services (main campus)	6911	420-2310
• Flying Squad	6022	10111
• Police Pretoria North	6005	353-5666
• Ambulance:		
- Rosslyn	6003	541-3421/6
- Pretoria	6002	326-0111
• Fire Brigade (Wonderboom)	6024	543-0335
• Tygerberg Poison Centre	6179	(021) 931-6129
• Emergency Medical Help:OP		
- Dr Kenneth Joubert (VAH)	8137	082 445 7280
- Sr Amanda Hamman (VAH)	8064	083 269 8874
- Sr Riani de Kock (VAH)	8149	082 802 3329
- Dr Lynette Bester (VAH)	8136	083 695 5078
- Ms Anne-Marie Human (VAH)	8216	082 540 4833
- Prof Frik Stegman (VAH)	8279	8148 (operating theatre)
- Mr Chris Neetling (Feed Store)	8004	8004 (roving phone)
- Prof Johnny vd Walt (Ethology/Physiology)	8025	082 784 8092
- Prof Ken Pettey (Ethology/Physiology)	8449	082 882 7356
- Ms Daléne Joslin (Anatomy/Physiology)	8212	082 374 1583
- Psychologist at OP (Wednesday), Voula Samouris	8243	083 754 5427
- Psychologist - main campus, Rina Buys	6126/6151	082 908 3688

**In the case of an emergency just dial the four digit number given above**

## When asked about some special/ extraordinary moments during the World Cup, Heleen mentioned the following:

- Knowing about the politics in the South African camp even before the World Cup started. In her opinion this was the real reason for their substandard performance.
- Feeling sorry for Shaun Pollock. Heleen feels that he did not deserve the treatment he got from the United Cricket Board.
- The scorers were paid in dollars. Never before have people associated with scoring cricket watched the exchange rate so intensely!
- Her most stressful situation was to score the match between India and Pakistan, knowing that there was an ongoing war between these two countries. The atmosphere was electric and the noise deafening, but in the end the public was fantastic!

