

OP

news

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Vulture research earns Dean a conservation award

Prof Gerry Swan, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort, recently received the Sasol Vulture Conservationist of the Year Award for 2005. This honour was bestowed upon him at an awards ceremony held at Sasol's Head Office in Sandton on 10 April.

This prestigious conservation award, under the joint auspices of the Birds of Prey Working Group of the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) and Sasol, was awarded to Prof Swan for the excellent work done under his leadership at Onderstepoort on the impact of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) on vultures in Asia and Africa.

This research forms part of an international effort to save the Oriental white-backed vulture. The population of this species of vulture – at one stage referred to as the most prominent bird in the world – has drastically declined in the last 15 years and is now on the brink of extinction. The decline in its numbers is largely due to their exposure to residues of diclofenac in bovine carcasses that are their major source of food.

The research programme, conducted over the past two years in collaboration with various organisations, including the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Vulture Unit of the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust, aims to determine the susceptibility of vultures to various NSAIDs.

Apart from a number of foreign researchers, four South Africans were also part of Prof Swan's research team: three researchers from the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Dr Vinny Naidoo, Ms Lizette Bekker and Ms Elmarie Killian, and a researcher from the Vulture Unit of the De Wildt Cheetah and Wildlife Trust, Ms Kerri Wolter.



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

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From the Desk of the Dean



It has been six months since I have taken office as Dean and while I have been settling into this responsible position, much has already happened. The Faculty received an additional amount of around R50 million from the Government, of which R18 million was already included in the subsidy income structure. It thus reduces the cross-subsidy of the University by about R32 million and improves the sustainability of cross-subsidisation provided by the University.

A visit to the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands by Prof Morkel Terblanche, Prof Koos Coetzer and myself served to strengthen the already close ties between the two Faculties of Veterinary Science and the continuation of the existing Memorandum of Agreement we have in place with that institution. I also visited the Veterinary School of Oslo in Norway where I attended a meeting of the Veterinary Deans of Southern and East Africa. During the meeting some important issues of mutual interest were discussed.

During the month of March the Faculty's top management Bosberaad took place in Skukuza where a new strategic plan was developed for the Faculty from now until 2009, based on the new strategic thrusts of the University. The objectives were, among others, to consider the vision and mission of the Faculty, to review the upcoming visitation of the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) and to consider strategies on undergraduate training and postgraduate programmes, research, recruit-

ment of veterinary students from the designated groups, personnel diversity, recruitment and retention, facilities and marketing.

Some of the most important decisions taken at the Bosberaad were:

- To review the undergraduate veterinary curriculum in terms of the sustainability of the current 3+4 model as well as the need for a core elective approach.
- To introduce a 3-year veterinary nurses degree.
- To develop a strategic plan focusing on an awareness, recruitment, in-care and after-care programme to deal with the transformation of the undergraduate student body in a holistic matter. It was agreed that the inability to recruit students and qualify adequate numbers of black veterinarians poses one of the greatest challenges for the Faculty.
- To make postgraduate training one of our primary thrusts in the next four years. Different matters with regard to the recruitment, in-care management and supervision of postgraduate students will be addressed.
- To make research one of the primary thrusts of our Faculty, aiming to stimulate and focus on unique and in-depth research that will differentiate our Faculty. The research focus areas will be reviewed to achieve this objective.
- To develop a strategic plan for the optimisation and future development of the Onderstepoort campus.

Over the last few years this Faculty has seen some much-needed and dynamic changes, through amalgamation and thereafter. In the previous issue of *OPNews*, I emphasised the fact that it is now our responsibility to utilise the platform created in order to move the Faculty forward and align its outputs with those of the University's strategic thrusts. In outlining the most important issues and challenges, I also stated that to meet these challenges we have to work together and that it may require a completely new approach and maybe even a journey on 'the road less travelled'.

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- To propose a change to the current financial model of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH), as well as to substantiate the current hospital management and clinical training model through comparison with other models applied in different parts of the world.
- To establish recruitment and retention of clinical staff in some disciplines as a critical matter that needs urgent action at the highest level.
- To strengthen the existing interface with the University of Utrecht to be the same as those with the Veterinary School of Oslo and that of the Davis campus of the University of California, through ongoing monitoring and assessment, as well as to develop other important collaborations and partnerships.
- To embark on an extensive marketing plan, which also includes initiatives undertaken by departments.

With regard to developing the new Faculty plan, inputs and comments will be sought from Faculty members and stakeholders and it will be aligned with that of the University. At the moment, various components and objectives of this plan are being developed by committees, work-groups and individuals tasked.

The Bosberaad also provided me with the opportunity to reiterate my personal vision and strategic intent for the Faculty.

In addition to the strategic objectives identified, I will be focusing on increasing

morale and creating unity and a positive, stimulating institutional climate within the Faculty by striving to make the work environment a personally enriching and satisfying experience for each Faculty staff member. It is also my intention to emphasise, by reinforcing and expanding existing initiatives, the contributions that veterinarians, at all levels, make to the welfare of the people in South Africa and, secondly, the very important part the Faculty plays in this regard. I will, furthermore, negotiate and attract sustainable funding, through new innovative initiatives but also by building on existing efforts.

Having said this, a team effort will be needed to take the Faculty to the next level of excellence and to depict the Faculty as one of the best of its kind in the world, a leading institution that will be at the forefront of innovation in training and research and distinction in service delivery.

In order for this to take place the Faculty plan must be a communication instrument and a marketing tool, personified and embraced by everyone in the Faculty. Do not ask what the Faculty can do for you; ask what the Faculty can do for the health and welfare of animals and humans alike through the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of animal diseases, the production of safe food and control of diseases transmitted from animals to humans.

Let us position ourselves in such a way that within ten years this Faculty will still be an internationally accredited seat of veterinary

excellence, and even more globally competitive, regionally pre-eminent and locally relevant.

We must strive to be an institution with a healthy organisational culture and a staff component that is proud to work here. We as staff members are the most important resource of this Faculty. Let us try and shape the future.

Last but not least, a tremendous amount of effort has been expended since October 2005 in compiling a self-evaluation report and preparing for the visitation by SAVC. The SAVC is the custodian of the veterinary and para-veterinary professions in South Africa and is charged, amongst others, with the responsibility of determining minimum standards for the training of people wishing to register with the Council in any of the recognised veterinary and para-veterinary professions. The visitation is designed to obtain a full view of the various training activities at the Faculty.

My appreciation and thanks to all those who have been involved in the preparation, but in particular to Prof Terblanche and Mrs Tromp for their major contribution. The outcome of the visitation is of critical importance to the Faculty.

Prof Gerry Swan
Dean

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To find a vulture-safe alternate to diclofenac, questionnaires were circulated to establish the safety of the alternative drug meloxicam. A four-phased study was undertaken in which over 50 vultures were exposed to

the drug without any toxic or other side effects. A fifth phase determined the effect of meloxicam residues in meat obtained from cattle recently treated at twice the recommended cattle dose. The research

found that African white-backed vultures are equally susceptible to diclofenac. Prof Swan's research will therefore not only contribute to the conservation of vultures in South Asia, but also in South Africa.

News from OP

Prof Nöthling obtains PhD degree from Utrecht



On 25 April this year, Prof Johan Nöthling from the Section of Reproduction obtained his PhD from the University of Utrecht after submitting and successfully defending a thesis entitled

Improving the utility of frozen dog sperm. Johan is looking forward to further developing his research and postgraduate teaching careers, which may now include the promotion of PhD students. Johan is grateful to all who helped make his qualification possible and trusts that his qualification will boost research and the throughput of postgraduate students in the Section and thereby that of the Department of Production Animal Studies.

Research: one hundred (not out)!



The research publication list of Prof Banie Penzhorn from the Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases reached the 100-mark during December 2005. By the end of the year his total stood at 101

publications. It has since grown to 106, with two papers in press and two manuscripts submitted.

When he joined Onderstepoort 25 years ago, Prof Penzhorn already had 24 published papers to his credit. He has maintained an average output of three papers published per annum.

Prof Penzhorn has been an NRF-accredited researcher for 20 years. He received the SAVA Research Award in 1995. Seven PhD and 10 MSc candidates have graduated under Prof Penzhorn's supervision. He is currently the supervisor or co-supervisor of six PhD and eight MSc candidates.

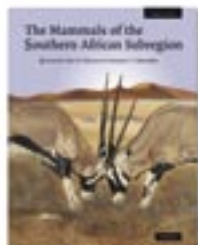
OP alumnus included in top 100 cited papers



To commemorate its 50th anniversary, the editors of the highly respected journal *Virology* have compiled a list of the journal's top 100 most cited papers. Dr Leon Potgieter, an OP

graduate and currently associate dean at the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, has been included in this list. Dr Leon Potgieter, along with Drs TL Poole, C Wang, RA Popp, A Siddiqui, and MS Collett, published *Pestivirus translation initiation occurs by internal ribosome entry* in 1995. Bovine viral diarrhoea virus is a pestivirus that affects cattle, goats, sheep, and swine (the disease in the latter is known as hog cholera). The authors' research determined the fundamental principle of how the pestivirus initiates its replication. That understanding allows others to manipulate the virus and may eventually allow them to control it. According to *Virology* editors, many of the papers on the list "have helped or influenced both a great many people and a great many subsequent advances in virology."

The Mammals of the Southern African Subregion



The Mammals of the Southern African Subregion has been extensively revised, expanded and updated by JD Skinner and CT Chimimba in a major project overseen

by an editorial committee constituted by the Mammal Research Institute at the University of Pretoria. Specialists on each mammalian order have served as sub-editors, and a range of independent and internationally recognised authorities have reviewed every species description.

This third edition incorporates the new mammalian classification. All the distribution maps and many of the spoor illustrations have been updated and redrawn. Several new colour plates have been added, and the whole design has been enhanced to ensure easy access to information.

It covers all mammals that occur naturally on the African mainland south of the Cunene and Zambezi rivers, together with all mammals indigenous to the subregion's coastal waters.

Its publication by Cambridge University Press comes in response to the international recognition earned by the previous two editions, which were published by the University of Pretoria.

The rapid accumulation of new information resulting from mammal research in southern Africa, together with radical taxonomic changes across all levels of mammalian classification, have necessitated this new edition, which presents the best and latest data accurately in one comprehensive volume for use by scientists and general readers alike.

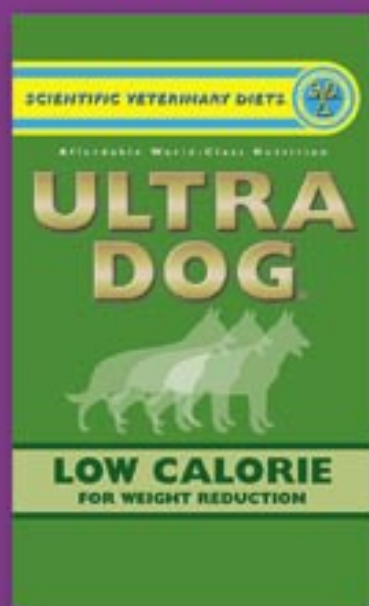
For further information, contact
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Faculty staff member excels at waterskiing

Lizette Bekker, laboratory manager in the Department of Paraclinical Sciences, captained the South African water-ski team to the All Africa Waterskiing Championships hosted at the Von Bach Dam in Namibia. The South African team won the cup and Lizette won the senior ladies 1 slalom, tricks and ramp events and also came second in ramp and third overall for all the ladies in Africa. Lizette will be taking part in the World Europe, Africa, Middle East (EAME) senior championships in Natal during October.

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The Classes of 1928 and 1929

by RD Bigalke, Chairperson : Veterinary History Committee of the South African Veterinary Association



Prof Dr PJ du Toit

While compiling the history of the Classes of 1928 and 1929 a certain amount of confusion arose as the photographs of the classes both bear the same date (1929). To further confuse matters, both photographs are composed of individual shots of the graduates rather than the more customary group photograph. However, a superficial examination of the photographs soon provided an answer to the riddle. JA (Jack) Thorburn (a member of the Class of 1927) was a super who qualified in 1928, a year later than his classmates. We also know that MC Robinson, who qualified in 1928, married Joan Morice, the first girl to study at Onderstepoort, who qualified in 1927. From this reasoning it could be deduced that the photograph dated 1929, on which four graduates and the Dean, Prof Dr PJ du Toit, appear, is that of the class of 1928. The other photograph, dated 1929, is therefore dated correctly.

The Class of 1928

LC Blomefield



LC Blomefield was born on 26 March 1905 in Durban. He was the only member of the class who spent his entire pre-retirement career with the Division of Veterinary

Field Services as a field veterinarian. He was appointed as a government veterinary officer on 14 January 1929 and was posted to Umtata in the Transkei where East Coast fever was rife. Transfers to Port St Johns, Flagstaff, Greytown and East London in 1944 followed. While in East London he spent several years doing full-time research on the control of ticks by dipping. He was subsequently invited by the Rhodesian government to advise their veterinary authorities

on dipping matters. He succeeded Cyril Flight as Assistant Director of the Cape East and Transkei region in 1955 when Flight was transferred to Cape Town.

In 1960 Dr Blomefield was transferred to Pietermaritzburg to take over the Natal region upon the retirement of Major LL Daly. He retired at the age of 60 but continued to carry out meat inspection for several years at the whaling station in Durban, presumably for the municipal authority. He died in Pietermaritzburg on 25 July 1971 at the age of 66.

RC (Richard) Clark



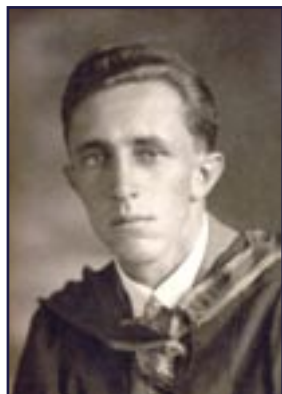
Richard Clark was born in Johannesburg on 13 February 1906. He attended King Edward High School together with his three brothers, Marshall,

Bernard and David. He matriculated in 1923. After qualifying in 1928 he joined the government service and was stationed as a government veterinary officer at various places such as the Allerton Laboratory, Nongoma, Ermelo, Bethlehem and Komatipoort. In 1938 he was transferred to the Veterinary Research Institute at Onderstepoort.

He first worked in the Pathology Department and in 1942 moved to the Physiology Department. In 1944 he was awarded a DVSc degree on the strength of his research in rumen physiology. When his senior, Prof JI Quin, was promoted to the position of Director of Veterinary Services in 1950, Prof Clark took over as Head of the Physiology Department and also as a part-time professor of Physiology. He became editor of the *Journal of the South African Veterinary Medical Association* in 1942, a position which he initially held for four years. Re-appointments lasting for shorter periods of time followed in 1953 and 1968.

He retired from Onderstepoort in 1968 at the age of 62 and died on 16 July 1977 at the age of 71.

MC (Mike) Robinson



Mike Robinson was born on 14 May 1903 in Johannesburg and, like Clark, attended King Edward High School and qualified as a veterinarian in 1928. He also joined the government

service as a government veterinary officer and completed service at Umtata and Nongoma. In 1930 he married Joan Morice and joined her in private practice in Johannesburg. However, they closed their practice in 1935 when Mike joined the Municipal Service in Johannesburg. He served as a Captain in the South African Veterinary Corps in World War II. He was due to sail on the mule ship SS Nirpura to India. However, the night before it departed he was replaced by Major AM Howie MRCVS. The ship was torpedoed on 3 September 1943 and Howie was one of many casualties. Dr Robinson's wife, Joan, died on 24 November 1944. He retired from the Johannesburg Municipal Service in 1960 and settled in Umkomaas, Natal, where he died on 23 March 1978 at the age of almost 75.

BM (Bertie) Horwitz



Bertie Horwitz was born in East London on 17 October 1907. Like most of his predecessors, he also joined government service shortly after qualifying in 1929 and was stationed

at Allerton Laboratory as a government veterinary officer until July 1931. He then practiced privately in Port Elizabeth while also doing duty as a part-time municipal veterinarian. From 1937 to 1940 he was employed by the municipality on a full-time basis. He then served in the South African Veterinary Corps in World War II. From 1944 to 1953 he served as a municipal veterinary officer in control of milk supply in Cape Town. In 1953 he was promoted to the position of Director of the Municipal Abattoir. He officiated in this capacity until his retirement in 1968. Dr Horwitz then rejoined the government service and was, among other things, involved with the drafting of the Animal Slaughter, Meat and Animal Products Act. In April 1973 he took up employment with the Department of Medical Microbiology at Tygerberg Hospital as an infection control officer. He died on 1 April 1982 aged 74.

After working as registrar to the Hon Mr Justice RA Tindall, he enrolled at Onderstepoort and qualified at the end of 1929. In 1930 he started his career as a research officer at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Laboratory and as a part-time lecturer in Anatomy. In 1936, at the age of 31, he was awarded a DVSc degree for his classical thesis, *The incidence and pathology of tumours of domesticated animals in South Africa* and appointed as a part-time professor of Anatomy (at that time all faculty posts were part-time positions). He also took on the responsibility of editor of the *Journal of the South African Veterinary Medical Association* at the end of the year, a position that he held for one year. He served as a member on the journal's editorial committee from 1931 to 1948. Prof Jackson remained professor of Anatomy at Onderstepoort until he resigned in September 1955 at the age of 50. Thereafter he was employed at various places, first at the medical school of the University of Witwatersrand and then as senior fellow of the National Cancer Association of South Africa. He left South Africa for the United Kingdom in 1957 but returned to Africa the following year to head the pre-clinical veterinary school at Makerere College in Kampala, Uganda, where he also served as professor of Anatomy. In 1961 he accepted a post as principal research officer at the Biological Research Institute at Achimota in Ghana and was appointed acting director the following year. He died in Ghana on 5 January 1965 at the age of 60.

The Class of 1929

The first thing that strikes one when looking at the photograph of the Class of 1929 is the absence of one of the graduates, BM (Bertie) Horwitz. His position is indicated by a neatly tied scroll. The photograph of Bertie Horwitz was provided by colleague Peter Belonje.

C (Cecil) Jackson



Cecil Jackson was born in London on 10 May 1905. He initially studied Veterinary Anatomy and Physiology at the Johannesburg University College, the pre-

decessor of the University of the Witwatersrand, and obtained a BSc degree in 1924.

WO (Wilhelm) Neitz



WO Neitz was one of the greatest research scientists ever produced by Onderstepoort. Born in Potgietersrus (now Mako-pane) on 17 November 1906, he was

the youngest child of a German missionary from the Berlin Mission. As a child he often had to look on helplessly when livestock owned by his parents and local farmers died, mostly from tick-borne diseases. To quote from his own curriculum vitae, 'These scenes, and the ruination of many a hopeful farmer in the bushveld, created a lasting impression and caused him to study veterinary science...'. He received his schooling in Potgietersrus and matriculated in 1924. After graduating in 1929 he was appointed as a research officer at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Laboratory under Prof PJ du Toit early in 1930. He never married and research became his passion. He was awarded a DVSc degree in 1945 for the research work in which he demonstrated the multiplicity of immunogenically distinct blue tongue strains and the absolute necessity of producing a polyvalent vaccine. His scientific productivity is legendary and it spanned several veterinary disciplines. Prof Neitz published 133 scientific articles up to 1971, of which several were monographs consisting of more than 100 pages. He shunned the European custom of adding his name to publications of his subordinates, as was done by some of his predecessors and earlier contemporaries at Onderstepoort. He held the positions of part-time professor of Protozoology and Virology from 1948 to 1957 at Onderstepoort; part time professor of Protozoology from 1958 to 1968 and was a visiting professor at the *Universidade Federale do Rio de Janeiro* in Brazil from 1972 to 1979. Prof Neitz died in Pretoria on 18 August 1979 at the age of 73 while on leave from Brazil. He served on many national and international scientific bodies such as the Expert Panel on Tick-borne Diseases of the FAO/OIE. He received several awards and other accolades, including the Senior Captain Scott Medal of the South African Biological Society in 1954; the *Havenga prys vir Geneeskunde* of the *Suid Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns* in 1957; the South Africa Medal of the South African Association for the Advancement of Science of 1970; the Gold Medal of the South African Veterinary Association in 1971; and the degree DMedVet *honoris causa*, which was awarded by the *Tierärztliche Hochschule* in HZannover, Germany in 1963.

EJ Pullinger



EJ Pullinger was born on 14 February 1906 in Johannesburg and completed his schooling at Oundle School in England in 1924. After graduating he proceeded to

England to register with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons as MRCVS. He was awarded the Clement Stephenson Research Scholarship in 1931. This enabled him to complete a postgraduate Diploma in Bacteriology at the London University. The diploma was awarded in 1933. Dr Pullinger spent the next four years at the Royal Veterinary College as a lecturer in Bacteriology and as a research assistant. On his return to South Africa he worked at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Laboratory until 1939 when he joined the Johannesburg Municipal Service. From 1940 to 1946 he saw active service as a major in the Veterinary Corps during World War II. After the war he was appointed as Assistant Director of the Johannesburg Municipal Abattoir. He died on 10 November 1959 in Johannesburg at the age of 53. One of his sons, Pat, was to follow in his father's footsteps by qualifying as a veterinarian in 1963.

FB (Bob) Wright



Bob Wright qualified in 1929. He worked briefly as a government veterinary surgeon in Estcourt and later as a private practitioner based on a farm south

of Estcourt. A serious accident which left his arms badly burnt made him give up

practice and he accepted a job with the Natal Parks Board, managing the Kamberg Nature Reserve and its visitors' restcamp. He also managed a small pack of hounds with which he hunted jackals on behalf of the Kamberg and Underberg area farmers' associations. A fine horseman, his hunt was for some years the most successful killer of jackals in the whole of South Africa. There is no information as to how he acquired the nickname of Bob, but he was known by this name throughout the Natal Midlands, even by the Zulus of the area who called him *Ubobrite*. Several classes of students may recall him as a meticulous but fair examiner in Animal Management, a chore which he looked upon as a privilege. He retired to a farm near Nottingham Road where he lived with his wife Winnie until his death. The dates of his birth and death could not be traced.

JJ (Swarie) Zwarenstein



Swarie Zwarenstein was born in Lydenburg on 20 January 1905. After qualifying he joined the state service as government veterinary officer and during his

career was stationed at the Allerton Laboratory, Onderstepoort, Nongoma and Eshowe. Most of his time was spent in the Division of Veterinary Field Services in which he rose to the rank of Sub Director, later known as Assistant Director. He served as an officer in the South African Veterinary Corps during World War II.

Dr Zwarenstein retired in 1965 at the age of 60, but was re-appointed as Poultry Pathologist at the Allerton Laboratory. In 1972 he was invited to join Rainbow Chicken Farms.

He was associated with the organisation until the time of his death in Johannesburg on 2 February 1974, after a short illness, at the age of 69.

Student miraculously survives plane crash

After speeding through my Bovines test on 18 March 2005, I leapt into my car and rushed off to join fellow student, Joanne Bendall, and her family who had invited me to fly to their game farm for the weekend. After fighting through the traffic to reach Rand Airport, our luggage was loaded aboard the Piper Cherokee 6 (a light seven-seater aircraft). Our pilot Brian, Joanne's dad, completed his external pre-flight checks and we boarded the plane along with a labrador and a Jack Russell terrier for the one-hour flight to Olifantskop.

Brian taxied to the end of the runway and performed the customary engine tests before requesting takeoff clearance. I suddenly realised we weren't climbing as fast as we should have been. We had reached a peak height of about 200 feet when we started losing power. Brian skilfully fought the battle between air speed and altitude to keep us in the air for as long as possible without stalling. We went down as slowly as we could and I remember the sound of metal gnarling when we hit the first tree. My next memory is of hitting the ground hard and smashing into a tree. We came to a stunned standstill after our flight of 19 seconds. Shaun, Joanne's brother, who had occupied the co-pilot seat, had been flung from the plane. I was hanging from my seat-belt, leaning over the seat-back that had collapsed. The entire front of the plane appeared to have been ripped off. Blood was pouring from my nose. The pilot was hanging unconscious and bleeding from his harness below me.

I released my seat-belt and fell to the ground. After I had determined that everyone was alive, including the dogs. Dee, Brian and a fellow passenger, who had taken charge of the scene, asked me to get the fire extinguisher. I found it hard to move in any coordinated way. Eventually, I had to lie down as I was getting extremely hot and had some difficulty breathing. Shaun was bleeding profusely. His nose was split open and I could literally see into his face.

The paramedics and fire-fighters arrived and the paramedics quickly performed triage and then began to work on Shaun. He was badly injured and had facial injuries, as well as broken ribs, deep wounds and a punctured lung. The rest of us were attended to and also packed into ambulances and rushed off to hospitals. The

dogs were taken to the local SPCA. No-one had escaped injury. Joanne had back pain, Dee a broken nose, a cracked pelvis and lacerations, and Brian had lacerations to his head and face. I was diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), lung contusion and severe multiple facial fractures. As a result of the TBI I had lost my ability to thermo-regulate and my temperature kept climbing. I was placed in an induced coma on a respirator for about a week to allow my lungs to recover and underwent complete reconstructive surgery of my face as it had been crushed in the accident. My fellow passengers were expertly repaired and, on recovering from their injuries, discharged. The labrador was treated for a muscular injury and also recovered. The Jack Russell terrier was unharmed.

On waking from the coma it became apparent that I had suffered serious damage to my brain, particularly the frontal lobe. Interestingly, the first few hours of wakefulness were perfectly normal, and then the garbled interpretations of a traumatised brain replaced the week-old sanity in my short-term memory. I was in ICU for about two weeks and then moved to a normal hospital ward. The treatment of the acute trauma was complete and I was transferred to a rehabilitation centre for neural rehabilitation. My family and I were told that I would improve slowly with therapy over the next six months or more. It was clearly explained that there was little to



A picture of the wrecked plane after the crash which Jonathan and his friends miraculously survived.

no chance of me getting back to university, let alone veterinary science, and that we should come to terms with that.

As it turned out, I was one of the lucky ones! After about six weeks of therapy I made a spontaneous, extremely quick and full recovery. This phenomenon is not uncommon, but is completely unpredictable. All it needs is one traumatised brain connection to recover and a whole lifetime of learning is restored!

This experience has left me with the certain knowledge that the outcome for all involved could have been very different. Our good fortune started with a hugely skilled pilot who kept a cool head right up to the last moment of consciousness. My personal recovery would not have been possible without such



skilled doctors and so many people thinking about me, visiting me and praying for me during this time. I am truly grateful.

-Jonathan Fish

It's not sympathy I seek; it's just my sanity, please!

My mind is numb. As hard as I try, I can hardly process a thought. Sleep deprived and on an all-time energy low due to not having time for lunch, I stand under the fluorescent glare and try to pull the pieces together. I go into the consult and get a great history, which I proceed to forget as my brain rejects any new input.

But life goes on after my 36-hour shift. I crawl into bed, almost too exhausted to sleep. I dream of glaring lights, difficult patients, jelco's and paperwork.

It grinds me down. Slowly but surely, it eats away at my mind. But no matter how I feel, life goes on.

Another packed day, consults, procedures, patient care. Up to ten cases at a time. I don't even know their names. Paperwork, costings, phoning owners. Oops, looks like I missed lunch again. All of a sudden everything is annoying and I am irritable. I manage to gather some small change and retrieve some nourishment from the trusty vending machine, which I proceed to eat on the run. I consider locking myself in the toilet where I could have two seconds to eat. Come to think of it I needed the toilet ages ago

I experience another night of fitful sleep, tossing and turning, unaware of what's happening to me. I get up for another day of work. My head feels thick, my eyes burn like fire. My sluggish body reminds me of lost sleep. I crawl out of bed, groaning. My feet ache.

I actually enjoy the work. It's rewarding and enjoyable and I learn a lot. But my body screams "No", my mind loses its grip and my inner being is being chiselled away, slowly. This goes on, day after day. The demands are great, the support is low. The hours are too long, sanity slowly slips through my fingers; the glare gets greater, the walls close in, the ceiling descends. Demands continue. I no longer matter. Finally the last insignificant event tips the

scale. Emotions I never knew I had well up in me. A huge lump forms in my throat, the world around me collapses. The tears flow freely. The crash is hard. I cannot handle it. The world now becomes a dark, lonely place. I run from the hospital, hide far away and cry myself dry. I have finally cracked and it is so sad.

Never before have I felt such despair. I am not a machine and stress can kill. I ask this question: Since when did the training of final years turn into such abuse of the body, mind and soul?

We are young, eager people with a hunger to learn, even to please. We give our all, so why are we repayed with such sniding remarks as 'lunch?', 'supper?' topped off with gruelling hours and little sleep? If I'd rather hang from a tree than go back to such working conditions (and it's not only me who feels this way) then something bad is festering at foot.

We all have stress, it's part of life, but let's not purposely impose it upon those young and keen at heart. Lives, hopes and aspirations are being crushed. All this Faculty achieves in the end is to churn out pale-faced, disillusioned graduates each year. My plea is to stop the abuse, we have needs too. Change is not bad, change is not scary, change is not easy, but change is ESSENTIAL.

It's not sympathy I seek; it's just my sanity... please.

- A broken final-year student

Response from the Deputy-Dean

Hats off to a very brave student willing to share a very personal experience. This is a very important and serious matter, which will require a response and intervention at various levels.

In the longer term, we will obviously have to evaluate the curriculum and consider major changes, a strategic priority already identified as such and in the process of being implemented. In the medium-term, we will have to assess the scope and extent of this problem within the student body and evaluate our existing support systems.

In the short term, we can only once again inform everybody of the available support mechanisms. We firmly believe in a system in which we have to support one another. One of our identified values, interdependency, requires us to be alert to the needs of others and seek assistance from each other. Various lecturers are already proactive in this regard and may be approached under these circumstances. This also holds true for the staff members of Student Administration, including the Deputy Dean and Dean.

The University has a 24-hour control room where assistance can be obtained as well as 24-hour crisis line for this very specific situation. At a more formal level, counselling services are available on campus as well as on the Hatfield campus. Details are provided at the beginning of every year and are also available from Student Administration.

Please be assured of our shared concern in this regard. We value the welfare of all staff and students and will collectively have to tackle this situation.

God bless you in all your endeavours.

*Prof Morkel Terblanche
Deputy Dean*

Emergency numbers:

Head of OP Residence:

Dr Jan Myburgh: 082 392 2534
Mrs Susan Myburgh: 083 235 6778

24-hour crisis line:

0800 00 64 28

Please refer to the back page for other numbers

54th International Veterinary Students Symposium

The 54th IVSA symposium was held in Pretoria and surrounding areas during December 2005. In keeping with the ethos of the IVSA slogan: *To benefit the people and animals of the world*, the South African symposium had as its theme *Primary health care and environmental awareness*.

A total of 57 students from 15 different countries attended the symposium. It was great to see the "old faithfuls" again, but the organisers were also very pleased to see the resurgence of delegates from countries like Malaysia and Ghana.

The seven-day symposium was jam-packed with activities ranging from mandatory general assemblies to a lion capture and outreach opportunities. Prof Gerry Swan, Dean, gave a very interesting talk and demonstration on vultures at the De Wildt

Cheetah Rehabilitation Centre. Thereafter, students enjoyed a tour of the centre and witnessed the cheetahs and wild dogs being fed.

Dr Peter Brothers of African Vet Safaris generously gave of his time to teach the students about wildlife immobilisation. They were able to witness him darting a lioness in the Pilanesberg National Park so as to affix a radio collar. Various data was collected from the animal as well. Special thanks go to Virbac for sponsoring the drugs used in the immobilisation. The students

were very impressed with Dr Brothers' professionalism and the manner in which he controlled such a large group in what was a potentially dangerous situation.

Due to the devastating fires that raged throughout much of Pilanesberg last year, the grass and bush was still quite short, thus making game viewing a pleasure.

The weather was exceptional and the delegates were subsequently hit with the proverbial "African Bug", all promising to return as soon as possible.

Another highlight was the outreach day held at Hammanskraal. It was felt that it was important to expose the delegates to various contrasts in our country and not to give them a window-dressed view of South Africa. On the day, Prof Cheryl McCrindle gave a hard-hitting talk on the importance of Veterinary Public Health in a developing country, and what to expect on the tour. She was instrumental in the organisation and preparation of the facilities and the people. The day would not have been possible, or have been such a success, if not for Prof McCrindle and Vukuzakhe.

A day was also spent in the Cradle of Humankind, visiting sites such as the Sterkfontein Caves and the San-Ostri ostrich farm where delegates had the chance to feed the ostriches by hand.

As Hills Pet Nutrition is the Diamond Sponsor of the IVSA Exco, they had a guest lecture, which was given by Dr Zambelli. He gave a very interactive talk on some of the misconceptions in the treatment of oncology in small animals.

-Brett Catherine & Vic Geddes



Some of the foreign delegates standing with Brett Catherine at the Pilanesberg Centre

Dr Naidoo receives Skye Foundation scholarship



In a ceremony in Cape Town, Dr Vinny Naidoo was awarded a scholarship by the Skye Foundation to complete a portion of his PhD studies in molecular pharmacology overseas. The Foundation supports South African students in their postgraduate studies. Scholarships are awarded purely on merit and are based on nominations from deans across the country.

This year the foundation awarded 12 scholarships to over 50 nominees. Awardees were from different universities and various disciplines of study from Astrophysics to Applied Mathematics. Vinny plans on studying the molecular control of urate excretion by the avian proximal convoluted tubule, more especially the effect uricosuric agents have on their functioning.

Students and staff challenge each other on the golf course

The annual student-staff golf tournament, an Onderstepoort tradition, took place at the Pretoria Golf Club on 24 November 2005.

For many years the challenge took place bi-annually, but the modern student seems to be faced with such a workload that it now only takes place once a year.

Teams are usually made up of between eight and ten members. The staff members usually have genuine handicap ratings while the students' handicaps are dubious. The format of the challenge is traditionally a betterball stableford with two staff members taking on two students.

Tee-off time was 07:00. The staff also had a visitor, Giles Le Maitre, all the way from St Andrews in Scotland. Both sides had their stars, but the staff walked away with the floating trophy, donated by two Rhodesians: Jeremy Bailey and Ian Halliday. The individual prize winner was Cilliers Louw, who had an absolute blinder, followed by Dr Carrington and Darshak Singh. The betterball / pairs was won by Cilliers Louw

and Byron Lotz, whilst Theuns Beer and Dewald Lourens for the staff, and Darshak Singh and Evan Alexander for the students, tied second.

The day was rounded off with a prize-giving,

refreshments and a fines session. Thanks are due to Sharkey for his efforts in arranging some really fantastic prizes from lams and for organising the sponsorship for the day. Thanks also go to Dr Campbell for arranging the venue and to the Pretoria Golf Club for offering such reasonable playing rates.



Staff (behind from left): Moritz van Vuuren, Theuns Beer, Morkel Terblanche; Jimmy Laughland; Dewald Lourens, Mervyn Campbell, Giles le Maitre (visitor), Henk Bertschinger and Chris Carrington (with trophy). Students (front from left): Byron Lotz, Darshak Singh, Cilliers Louw, Adriaan Kitshoff, Gerhard Kloppe, Ross Elliot, Evan Alexander, Matthew Robertson, Paul Burden and Murray Stokoe.

Just in case • Emergency numbers

• Security Services (main campus)	6911	420-2310
• Flying Squad	6022	10111
• Police Pretoria North	6022	10111
• Ambulance: - Rosslyn	6003	541-3421/6
- Pretoria	6002	326-0111
• Fire Brigade (Wonderboom)	6024	543-0335
• Tygerberg Poison Centre	6179	(012) 931-6129
• Emergency Medical Help: OP		
- Sr Amanda Hamman (VAH)	8064	083 269 8874
- Sr Riani de Kock (VAH)	8149	082 802 3329
- Ms Anne-Marie Human (VAH)	8216	082 540 4833
- Prof Frik Stegnam (VAH)	8279	8148 (operating theatre)
- Mr Chris Neetling (Feed Stroe)	8004	8004 (roving phone)
- Prof Ken Pettey (Ethology/Physiology)	8449	082 882 7356
- Mrs Daléne Meyer (Anatomy/Physiology)	8212	082 374 1583
- Psychologist at OP(Wednesday), Voula Samouris	8243	083 754 5427
- Psychologist - main campus, Rina Buys	6127/6151	082 908 3688
• 24-hour university crisis line		0800 00 64 28
• Head of OP Residence:		
- Dr Jan Myburgh	8350	082 392 2534
- Mrs Susan Myburgh		083 235 6778

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