

Faculty engages small-scale farmers as part of its Feedlot Challenge

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Students, UP staff and small-scale feedlot farmers during the feedlot challenge training day

It is well-established that emerging economies can address many challenges, including skewed income distribution and poverty alleviation, by engaging the so-called base of the pyramid and securing their access to the economy. Add to this the challenge of food safety and security for an expanding human population and declining natural resources, and the challenges become poignantly relevant and crucial in importance.

Against this background, and fulfilling its objective of being socially responsive and locally relevant, the Department of Production Animal Studies in the Faculty of Veterinary Science invited emerging small-scale feedlot farmers from surrounding communities to participate in the ongoing annual Feedlot Challenge taking place at the faculty among 5th year student groups.

The Feedlot Challenge is scheduled to end on 24 May this year. The purpose is to ensure that 5th year veterinary students “pay it forward” by engaging with the community through exposing and training the small-scale feedlot farmers on the operations and dynamics of modern feedlot systems.

Additionally, a Farmer Engagement day was held at the Faculty on Saturday, 16 February 2019 where farmers were given a lecture on current trends and good practices in feedlot farming. The farmers were given an opportunity to walk amongst the feeding kraals where students shared with

them information on feedlotting. The students will also be visiting the individual farmers later in the month to do an assessment of their current feedlot operations. To complete the initiative, students will provide a detailed report with recommendations on how certain areas of the farmers' operations could be improved.

As part of the training, the farmers will also participate in ongoing stages of the feedlot challenge where they will for instance be invited to witness the "on-hoof evaluation and judging" phase of the feedlot challenge on 16 May 2019. This will give farmers an opportunity to learn about proper selection of good animals for feedlots. The Department is excited about the opportunity presented to student training, as this prepares our future professionals not only to be successful in the Community Service year, but also to develop an attitude of constructive and beneficial community engagement. As Cicero said: "Non nobis solum nati sumus" - Not for ourselves alone are we born...

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