

# OP News

Newsletter of the Faculty of Veterinary Science,  
University of Pretoria for alumni and staff members

*Alumni Matter*



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## Veterinary milestone: UP graduates 100th class of animal health experts



*Celebrating the graduation of the 100th Veterinary Science class at the University of Pretoria.*

South Africa's only Veterinary Science university faculty earlier this year graduated its 100th class – a historic moment for the University of Pretoria (UP) and animal health in Africa.

UP's Faculty of Veterinary Science celebrated this major milestone on 9 May 2025, when it capped its 100th Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) class during the University's Autumn 2025 graduation season.

**Click here** to listen to an **interview** with Prof Vinny Naidoo, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science on Cape Talk radio: <https://omny.fm/.../on-the-couch-up-celebrates-100th...>

"The graduation of our 100th Veterinary Science class is a testament to the enduring legacy and future promise of veterinary science in South Africa," said Professor Vinny Naidoo, Dean of the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science and Professor in Veterinary Pharmacology, in an interview before the ceremony. "UP-trained veterinarians have helped South Africa gain a reputation for producing world-class veterinary research and scientific advancement. This is a proud moment for the university, the faculty, and all the veterinarians and other professional staff who have contributed to the training of our students over more than 100 years."

**Read more: [bit.ly/100thClassGraduation2025](https://bit.ly/100thClassGraduation2025)**

# Dean's message

Dear Onderstepoort Alumni,

Warm greetings from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science. As Dean, it is my privilege to reach out to you—our esteemed alumni—to express our heartfelt gratitude for your ongoing contributions to the veterinary profession and to this faculty in different ways. Whether through your clinical excellence, research, mentorship, or simply the inspiration you provide to those following in your footsteps, your impact resonates deeply within our halls and far beyond.

Our alumni have always been, and will always remain, a vital part of our faculty's story. You are the embodiment of our legacy and a beacon for future generations. Your successes and dedication continue to elevate the standing of veterinary science in South Africa and around the world.

In this spirit of enduring connection, I wish to extend an open invitation to you to revisit your alma mater—not only in fond memory, but in active participation. We would be honoured to welcome you back at the faculty as guest lecturers, for guest presentations or even presenting a block of lectures. Your experiences, insights, and professional journeys offer invaluable learning opportunities for our current students and staff alike. We were recently delighted to host Dr John Adam, an alumnus who shared his extraordinary adventures in veterinary care during a captivating 20-minute talk at the faculty. His stories—rich in wisdom and humour—drawn from his book *The Wild and Wonderful*, were a true testament to the unique paths veterinarians walk.

Similarly, during the 30th anniversary reunion of the OP Class of 1995, we had the privilege of welcoming Prof Banie Penzhorn, also a distinguished alumnus and former senior lecturer,



who delivered a compelling guest lecture that bridged past and present with insights that only a lifetime of experience can provide. On 7 August we were also privileged to host some of you for an alumni brunch. May this be the start of many more alumni celebration events.

There are more examples involving some of our alumni colleagues who also visited our faculty from abroad where they now reside and work. All in all these engagements not only enrich our academic environment but reaffirm the powerful bonds within our veterinary community, not only locally but globally.

Most recently, we celebrated a momentous milestone—the graduation of our 100th BVSc class. This proud event marks over a century of dedication to veterinary education and excellence. It is a testament to the legacy you have helped build, and the future promise that lies ahead. Through your efforts and the reputation you uphold, South Africa continues to be recognised for producing world-class veterinary professionals and research.

As we look to the future, we do so with gratitude, pride, and a hopeful eye on continued collaboration with you—our alumni. We value you deeply and hope to see many of you back at the Onderstepoort campus, sharing your stories, expertise, and passion with the next generation.

With sincere appreciation and warm regards,  
**Prof Vinny Naidoo**  
**Dean: Faculty of Veterinary Science**  
**University of Pretoria**

Dr Bull and a patient



*In the first year of their charity drive, Craig View Veterinary Clinic collected just over 700 Easter eggs. In 2025 just over 4000 boxes were collected and distributed as well as 1642 cans of non-perishable food.*



## From operating table to Easter table: a vet's mission to give back

When Craig View Veterinary Clinic in Boksburg first opened its doors on the East Rand in 2017, one thing quickly became clear: the community was enthusiastic, supportive, and deeply connected.

“As a Christian who celebrates Easter, I wanted to give back to the humans in our community over this special period of new beginnings,” says the founder of Craig View Veterinary Clinic and alumnus of the University of Pretoria’s Faculty of Veterinary Science, Dr Clifford Bull.

The clinic has always gone above and beyond for animals—assisting welfare organizations, participating in sterilization campaigns, and responding to wildlife emergencies in urban areas. But the vision was always broader. It wasn’t just about the pets—it was also about the people.

“I specifically wanted to assist the humans in our society—disadvantaged children and the often-forgotten senior citizens,” Dr Bull explains. “As veterinarians, we are often seen as essential service providers... but do they know us as humans?”

That sentiment sparked what has become a deeply personal and growing initiative: an annual Easter charity drive. What started as a small effort collecting just over 700 Easter eggs in its first

year has now blossomed into a community-wide campaign. To date, the clinic has helped collect and distribute over 1.5 million rands worth of Easter eggs since 2018 — and for the first time this year, they’ve expanded the drive to include non-perishable food donations.

This year the clinic collected just over 4,000 boxes of Easter eggs, and 1642 cans of non-perishable food. This is no small feat and Dr Bull and all his staff members are proud of what they have achieved.

“What was an unexpected and pleasant result was the genuine engagement between ourselves, donors, and those receiving these Easter eggs,” says Dr Bull. “It’s a mix of two vastly different worlds—during the Easter period, we could perform a craniate repair in the morning and then be in a minority informal settlement in the afternoon—where many of the people haven’t had a meal for a week.”

The contrast is often jarring, but that’s what makes the outreach so meaningful. “To explain to those residents what some clients spend on their animals is more than their collective income for the year would be a humbling thought,” Dr Bull reflects.

“That’s why I think it’s so important for my team and me to take a break from our duties once a year to understand what’s going on in our greater community.”

Sometimes, the connection goes full circle. A visit to deliver Easter treats might lead to organizing a sterilization campaign for a feral cat colony in that same settlement.

“Then I think we are truly doing what we promised to do when we took our oath.”

The question has come up more than once: “What is a vet doing running an Easter egg drive?”

“I have thought about that a lot whilst driving to various wildlife appointments,” he admits. “But I think there has never been a greater time in our country to give back, and I believe in our profession, there has never been a better time to bridge the gap between our community and ourselves.” This isn’t just a charity drive. It’s a quiet but powerful reminder that compassion doesn’t end at the clinic door.

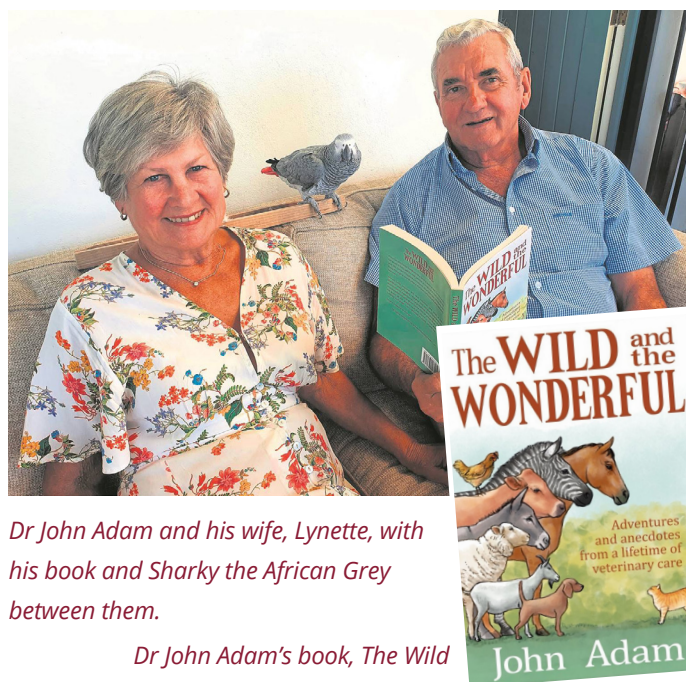


## The wild, the wonderful, and the vet who lived it

The Faculty of Veterinary Science was recently delighted to host Dr John Adam, a retired alumnus of the faculty who shared his extraordinary adventures and anecdotes from a lifetime of veterinary care during a captivating 20-minute talk.

His stories — rich in wisdom and humour — drawn from his book *The Wild and the Wonderful*, were a true testament to the unique path veterinarians walk.

His presentation was a warm and engaging occasion. After his introduction by the Dean, Prof Vinny Naidoo, Dr Adam offered the audience a glimpse into the experiences and characters that shaped *The Wild and the Wonderful* over a period of 53 years.



*Dr John Adam and his wife, Lynette, with his book and Sharky the African Grey between them.*

*Dr John Adam's book, *The Wild and the Wonderful*.*



*The spot prize winners and Sr Reinette Ludike (quiz master during the event, left) together with the Dean, Prof Vinny Naidoo and Dr John Adam (both at the back).*

The book is a heart-warming, witty, and candid memoir tracing the life of a veterinarian whose career spanned both public and private practice across southern Africa and in the United Kingdom.

From childhood holidays on a Lowveld farm to encounters with diverse people and animals in rural and urban settings, Dr Adam's reflections capture the beauty, humour, and challenges of a life dedicated to service. Rich with unforgettable characters and heartfelt insights, this self-published gem is a tale of extraordinary endeavour that will resonate with animal lovers and humanitarians alike. Spot prizes, awarded

to those who could correctly answer questions about his life and career, added a fun twist to the event.

Congratulations also to the following lucky draw winners: Katelyn Titan, Loneil Johnson, Oliver Vigne, and Shaen MacDevette. Dr Adam has decided to donate a part of the proceeds of his book to the Fisantekraal Animal Welfare (FAW) NPO as a result of their excellent work, not only with animals but also in creating awareness among people on how to care for their animals. The book is now available in bookstores via Aurora Books ([info@aurorabooks.co.za](mailto:info@aurorabooks.co.za))

2025

## FACULTY AT a GLANCE



Read more

[https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/13/faculties-at-a-glance-2025\\_vets.zp254482.pdf](https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/13/faculties-at-a-glance-2025_vets.zp254482.pdf)

# Future vets in the making: 78 learners get a taste of the dream at OP campus



The I Wanna Be a Vet Professional weekend is an annual initiative that was recently hosted by the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science for the 13th time. The faculty's Onderstepoort Paraveterinary and Veterinary Student Committee (OPVSC) started this event in 2010 to encourage school learners, especially previously disadvantaged learners to develop an interest in veterinary science.

Top achieving learners from all 9 provinces in our country, who have shown interest in this field and have the correct subject choices (Mathematics and Physical Science) are selected to attend this eye-opening event.

The faculty's aim is to provide them with an unforgettable experience by exposing them to day-to-day activities that are carried out by qualified veterinary nurses and veterinarians, assisted by our students.

The average number of learners selected for this event has always been a maximum of 60 but this year was unprecedented when the faculty's Onderstepoort campus successfully hosted 78 learners for the very first time. They filled lecture hall 1-37 in anticipation of the three-day event and received warm welcome messages from the Dean of the faculty, Prof Vinny Naidoo, and Prof Rhoda Leask, Deputy Dean: Teaching & Learning at the faculty.



During the weekend the OPVSC not only showcased the state-of-the-art facilities on campus, but the learners experienced numerous practicals and demonstrations which included activities involving cows, pathology, goats, horses, anatomy and Beagle dogs.



Some learners have never been to our campus before while others have never touched or come even close to a cow, goat or horse.

The weekend was fun-filled and there was also time for a games and Q and A session on Saturday evening that was arranged by the student committee who worked eagerly to create everlasting memories for these inquisitive minds. The quite successful weekend was concluded with a Sunday morning breakfast at UP's Future Africa campus.

## UP veterinary experts perform groundbreaking elephant surgery in Cambodia



*The tusk extraction procedure also served as a valuable learning experience for vets from Thailand and Singapore. Prof Tordiffe and Prof Steenkamp are squatting down on the left and right side of the elephant's head.*

An elephant in distress due to a fractured tusk is nothing new to Prof Gerhard Steenkamp, veterinary specialist in dentistry and maxillofacial surgery at the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science. Over many years, he has travelled the globe to lead and assist with specialised procedures involving elephants and various other wildlife species. However, this time an emergency call led him to Cambodia, a country where such a procedure on elephants was never done before.

The journey leading to this huge undertaking began about 18 months ago when Dr Navaneetha Roopan, head veterinarian of Wildlife Alliance - an NGO active in Cambodia - visited Kulen Elephant Forest (KEF). Kulen Elephant Forest is a conservation organisation, owned and co-founded by David-Jaya Piot, a French Cambodian hotelier. The reserve is a 400-hectare elephant retirement park which opened in December 2019 and protects the former captive Asian elephants in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia.



During his visits to KEF, Dr Roopan noticed that there was an elephant named Chi Chlorb with a fractured tusk. The Wildlife Alliance in Cambodia works extensively in wildlife conservation and rescue which is their primary focus.

They operate the Phnom Tamao Wildlife Rescue Centre (PTWRC), 40 km south of Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia. Dr Roopan and Prof Steenkamp's paths crossed when Dr Roopan attended a conference in July 2024 in China where Prof Steenkamp was lecturing.

"After the talk, Dr Roopan approached me and asked if I would assist with Chi Chlorb's case. Of course, I agreed," Prof Steenkamp - who also owns the company Vetdent International - says.



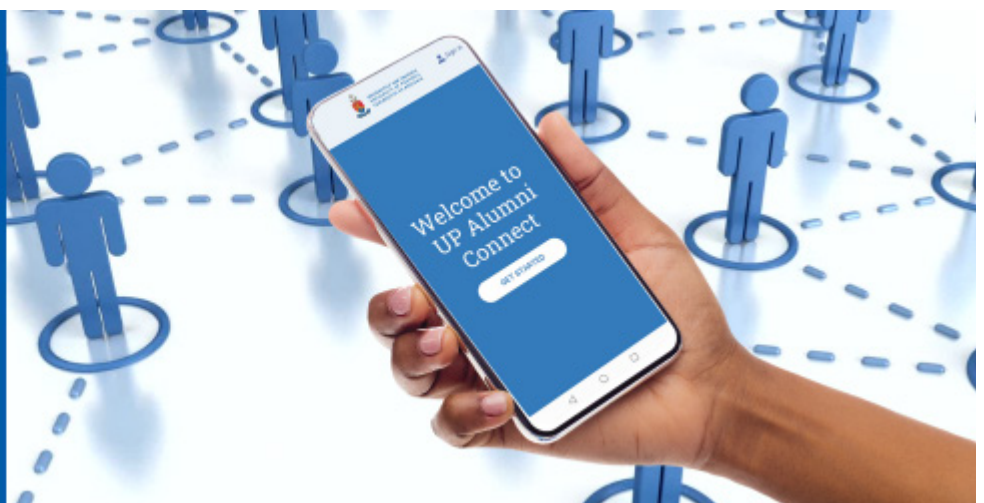
Read more: <https://bit.ly/CambodiaElephantSurgery2025>

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# Legacy of learning: Prof Banie Penzhorn honoured at 1995 BVSc alumni's 30-year reunion



“Third years, if I ever find out one day that you have made a blood smear and not stained it!!! Wherever you are in the world, I will find you...” It was this unforgettable ‘warning’ — delivered to their third-year class by retired lecturer Prof Banie Penzhorn — that prompted an alumnus of the BVSc class of 1995, Dr David Da Silva to write a heartwarming email letter to Prof Penzhorn.

This letter also served as a tribute to Prof Penzhorn when the OP class of 1995 recently celebrated their 30th anniversary reunion at the Faculty of Veterinary Science’s Onderstepoort campus.

During the reunion visit on 22 April the attendees were welcomed by Prof Vinny Naidoo, Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science whereafter

Prof Rhoda Leask, Deputy Dean: Teaching and Learning delivered an address to the 29 guests who attended the event. A 30th anniversary lunch, a tour of the faculty’s Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH), Skills Lab and OP Village Residence all formed part of the proceedings.

One of the highlights of the day was a lecture given by Prof Penzhorn titled *Canine and Feline Babesiosis Revisited* which brought a lot of memories back to the alumni present. Fittingly, Dr Da Silva then thanked Prof Penzhorn by reciting the email that he has written previously to Prof Penzhorn. It was a tribute to a former staff member and parasitology lecturer that has left a memorable legacy at the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

**Following is a text version of the tribute by Dr Da Silva:**

*“Third years, if I ever find out one day that you have made a blood smear and not stained it!!! Wherever you are in the world, I will find you...” It is this statement made by you to my class at OP which has prompted my writing you.*

*Almost three years ago, I emigrated to Australia and have since been working with a practice on the beautiful south coast of New South Wales, doing some cattle work, primarily with dairy herds. We're situated in a region where Theileria orientalis is becoming increasingly prevalent. Interestingly, there seems to be a reluctance among many local vets to engage in microscope work. As a result, the skills I gained at OP—particularly my microscopy training—have earned me a surprising amount of “street cred” here.*

*The learning curve has been steep since I arrived in Australia, and I've picked up many new skills from my Aussie colleagues. But at no point have I ever felt that my qualification, earned in a far-off African land, was in any way inferior.*

*In fact, I often find myself examining bovine blood smears (all of them stained, I might add!) in the quiet of the clinic, scanning for Theileria orientalis and distinguishing it from Howell-Jolly bodies and other artifacts. And time and again, in those moments of focused solitude, your voice comes back to me—repeating that famous threat about unstained smears!*

**This brings me to the heart of my message.**

*When it comes to producing a quality veterinary degree, you and your colleagues—especially Ivan Horak, Fred Reyers, and Andrew Leisewitz, in my personal experience—have truly excelled. You have every reason to hold your heads high among the global veterinary community. If, after 24 years, I still remember your words to us as third years... if I still recall those tricky bonus-point exam questions... if I still reflect on your interactions with students—that is surely evidence that you went far beyond the role of a parasitology lecturer. You became a mentor, a motivator, and a lasting influence on young veterinary minds.*

*I know OP has its annual lecturer awards to honour the outstanding educators of each year. But aside from that, there's no tangible, long-term measure of the impact a lecturer has made. I cannot speak for other graduates, but I can say without hesitation that you enriched and influenced my own journey profoundly.*

*And for that, Prof Penzhorn, I thank you.*

The day was concluded with a spitbraai and during the day there was also time for a group photo.



*Prof Penzhorn is standing in the front row, on the left.*



A team from the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science recently performed groundbreaking 5-hour invasive surgery to restore normal breathing in Houdini, a white rhino bull who survived an earlier poaching incident. Led by Prof Gerhard Steenkamp, veterinary specialist in dentistry and maxillofacial surgery, and supported by specialists in anaesthesia, equine surgery, and wildlife medicine, the operation pushed the boundaries of veterinary science – including probably the world-first use of haemodilution in rhino surgery.



Read more: <https://ow.ly/XFB150VWiUi>

Click to see a short video of the operation: <https://bit.ly/HoudiniOpVideo2025>

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## OP News publication information

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