

## Prof Gareth Bath receives World Veterinary Association's 2020 Global Animal Welfare Award

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Prof Gareth Bath, emeritus professor of the Faculty of Veterinary Science and chairperson of the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (LWCC) was recently awarded the 2020 Global Animal Welfare Award by the World Veterinary Association (WVA). This is a major achievement and the Faculty is immensely proud of Prof Bath. The award would have been handed over during the congress of the WVA on 6 April, but COVID-19 interfered and the congress was cancelled.



He was nominated for the award by the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA), and the nomination makes fascinating reading; only some of the many activities he was involved in are listed below:

- In the mid-nineteen seventies, through a thorough search of literature, he determined that urolithiasis in rams was caused by excessive dietary phosphate. Based on a submission he made to the Registrar of the governing Act, regulations on feeding were amended, bringing about a drastic decline in cases of bladder stones in concentrate-fed rams and bucks.
- As a member of the Faculty of Veterinary Science from the late eighties, he emphasised the importance of animal welfare in undergraduate training. Under his guidance, animal welfare was approached as an integral part of animal ownership, care and health, as well as production and profitability, rather than as an optional extra or inconvenient obstacle.
- In 1999 he was identified as the Faculty Representative of the Livestock Welfare Coordinating Committee (LWCC). He took the initiative for introducing and codifying correct approaches to potentially harmful or painful farm procedures like castration, marking and tail docking in Merino sheep. Codes for correct procedures developed by voluntary organisations like LWCC have less legal status than those published by government bodies, and so LWCC helped the South African Bureau of Standards to convert existing LWCC Codes into SABS Standards; these have been completed for Transportation by Road; Sale yards and Auctions; Pigs; and Dairy Cattle.

Through the LWCC Prof Bath was/is also actively involved in a wide variety of production animal welfare matters:

- The phasing out and elimination of the “Mules operation” in wool sheep.
- Assisting Government to draft regulations under the Animals Protection Act of 1962 on a wide variety of issues. These regulations will complement the Act and can be readily transferred to a proposed Animal Welfare Act when necessary.
- Taking a stand against the asphyxiation of pigs by CO<sub>2</sub> gas as a method of “stunning” prior to slaughter.
- Establishing a methodology for the removal of ostrich chick toenails that satisfied both welfare concerns and industry.
- Mediation between industry and welfare organisations.
- Involvement in the establishment of Animal Ethics Committees.
- The development of a ten-test evaluation system for the scientific, defensible, thorough and methodical evaluation of all procedures on farms that have the potential of risks to animal wellbeing.
- The development of a comprehensive evaluation checklist for the welfare of animals at saleyards, auctions and similar.
- The ongoing development of a farm-level scorecard to assist evaluation of livestock welfare by veterinarians.
- Many presentations on livestock welfare over two decades at important organisation meetings, including the World Veterinary Association, the OIE, the International Sheep Veterinary Association, WAHVM, South African Veterinary Association, South African Society for Animal Science, and the Ruminant Veterinary Association of South Africa.
- Numerous articles promoting livestock welfare to a wide readership and especially farmers, in publications like Veeplaas, Wool Farmer and Red Meat, and has given interviews for television and radio programmes relating to animal welfare.

- Over 30 Policy or Position Statements for consideration by the LWCC and then, after approval, become national consensus documents for the issues they address.
- Amongst several awards for services rendered over the years, he was presented with a certificate of appreciation by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty of Animals (NSPCA) for his outstanding commitment and service to animals and to the LWCC in 2018.

- Author PvD

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