

# OP News

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

December 2024 | 01



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
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Faculty of  
Veterinary Science

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*Dr Angelika Loots setting up a run on the xMAP machine*

## UP advances diagnostic tools to tackle cattle abortions

Cattle farming remains a pillar of global agriculture, yet cattle abortions impose a significant challenge, leading to major financial losses and health concerns within herds. The Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Pretoria is making strides to combat this issue by advancing diagnostic technologies with the use of Luminex xMap technology. The xMap system's innovative approach leverages magnetic beads dyed with specific colors, enabling the detection of up to 500 pathogens in a single test. This could be a game-changer for farmers, allowing for rapid and large-scale testing that detects multiple pathogens simultaneously, offering quicker and more accurate diagnostics than ever before. Our research team, led by Dr. Angelika Loots and Professor Melvyn Quan, has already achieved promising results with pathogens such as *Brucella abortus* and *Listeria monocytogenes*. These advancements are setting the stage for better disease management and preventative strategies, thanks to funding from the Red Meat Industry Services.

**Full story: <https://bit.ly/3UPFLY5>**

# Dean's message



It has been a few years since the faculty has released an issue of OP News. Many factors were contributory, especially a shift in our readership interests towards electronic media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (the now notorious X). While the faculty has remained active on such platforms, the absence of our core magazine has been noticeable. Going forward we will be rebranding the OP News as a more alumni focused magazine to share our stories and news with a very huge part of the OP family, being our alumni which we grow every year.

Even more important is that we would like our alumni to stay with us on our journey of excellence as we build an even stronger veterinary faculty, to not only ensure that we have sufficient members of professionals joining the economy every year, but more importantly,

that professionals graduating from a strong faculty have stronger voices.

The re-launch of the magazine also comes at an important moment in the history of the faculty. In 1920, the then South African government agreed to start a local veterinary training programme. While the programme took time to establish itself, today we sit at a momentous occasion with the 2024 class becoming the 100<sup>th</sup> group of students to receive their BVSc degree. It is a major milestone that has had a tremendous impact on the country and our food security. It has also been a pleasure to invite our alumni to faculty to celebrate their various reunions and get-togethers. None of these are however as special as welcoming our vets entering their golden years by celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> reunions. To us this reflects the real value of a BVSc graduate as a single person can continue to have an impact after a 50-year career. Which other profession can brag about this?

Thank you for taking the time to enjoy our stories in the current issue. Please feel free to get in contact with us and to make suggestions on what you'd like to see in the magazine. We also would welcome any suggestions and support in making the faculty stronger. Here's to another 100 years of veterinary education in South Africa.

**Prof Vinny Naidoo**  
**Dean: Faculty of Veterinary Science**



*The faculty's annual Doctoral Celebration ceremony has become a tradition since 2014 and always takes place the day before graduation day. No less than 29 postgraduate qualifications were conferred during the graduation ceremony in September 2024 which included 4 PhD degrees and 17 Master's degrees. At the autumn graduation ceremony in May 2024, 19 PhD degrees, 24 Master's, 11 Honours degrees and eight postgraduate diplomas were conferred.*

# It was good to see you after all these years



*The group in front of the Arnold Theiler Building. In front is Louis van Jaarsveld. Second row from left to right: Mike Lowry, Martin Goldberg, Pieter Grimbeek, and Gerhard Harmse. In the back row from left to right are Johan Kriek, Ian Glass, Daan Goosen, Chris van Vuuren and Joop Boomker.*

When a 50-year reunion is taking place, you will regularly hear phrases such as ‘how have you been’, and ‘it is good to see you after all this time.’ It was no exception when a few members of the OP class of 1974 recently reunited on the Faculty of Veterinary Science’s Onderstepoort campus.

After being welcomed by the Dean, Prof Vinny Naidoo, the nine classmates of 1974, some accompanied by spouses, or a family member enjoyed a lunch in the faculty’s Elephant Boardroom.

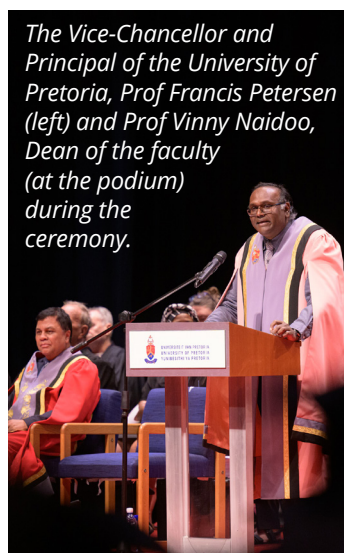
To see your classmates after such a long time, some for the first time since they graduated, will always bring about long conversations, lots of questions and lots of memories. During the day these conversations were further stimulated when they were treated on tours of the Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH), the faculty’s residence complex and the Onderstepoort Skills Laboratory.

There was also time for a few group photos to remind them about the special get-together and they ended the day at Batter Boys in Montana.

# A very special oath-taking ceremony

On 5 December 2024, the Faculty of Veterinary Science held its oath-taking ceremony, marking a significant milestone. This year, the BVSc class of 2024 became the 100th cohort to graduate from the program, celebrating a century of awarding the BVSc degree. Our alumni can also take pride in the fact that - like the students at this occasion - they were part of a long and proud tradition. It also highlights the long-standing tradition of excellence at the University of Pretoria. The event was a testament to the dedication and hard work of everyone involved over the years. While the veterinary science program has evolved, its core mission—positively contributing to the university, the country, and food security—remains unchanged.

Looking ahead, the faculty is also proud to recognize the veterinary nursing profession, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in South Africa in 2027, a milestone that will be significant for both the profession and the University of Pretoria. Congratulations to all veterinary science and veterinary nursing students graduating early in 2025. Your achievement is a remarkable one, and we commend you for your dedication and success.



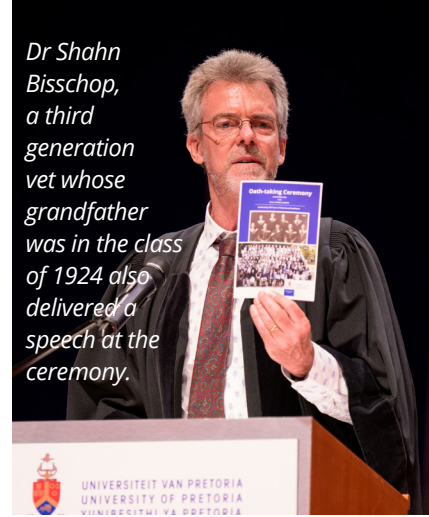
*The Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, Prof Francis Petersen (left) and Prof Vinny Naidoo, Dean of the faculty (at the podium) during the ceremony.*



*Laurie Aucamp receives the Theiler medal from Prof Petersen during the ceremony. The medal is awarded to the student who excels in merit and dedication throughout the veterinary degree programme (BVSc I - VI)*



*The BVSc and BVetNurs classes of 2024*



*Dr Shahn Bisschop, a third generation vet whose grandfather was in the class of 1924 also delivered a speech at the ceremony.*



## Access the latest news about your old faculty and interact with your peers

The Faculty of Veterinary Science is indispensable to the economy of our country and serves the interests of all the people of South Africa. Well-known for its quality of training, research, services and community engagement, the faculty is an internationally accredited seat of veterinary excellence. It aims to better the life of the average South African by benefiting from better nutrition and the growth of the South African agro-economy.

Being the only one of its kind in South Africa, we are proud of the standard and quality of our veterinary training and research. The veterinary science course has been ranked 43rd globally in the QS World University Rankings for 2019, the first time its course offering has been ranked by QS. In 2023 it was ranked in the top 51–70 of the QS World University Subject Rankings.

In 2020 the faculty also celebrated the centenary of veterinary education in South Africa. As the current custodian of veterinary training, the faculty is immensely proud of this milestone.

We kindly invite you to sign-up and join the UP Alumni Connect Platform.

Please click on the following link: <http://bit.ly/2ucxXD2>

Alternatively you can also go to <https://upalumniconnect.com>



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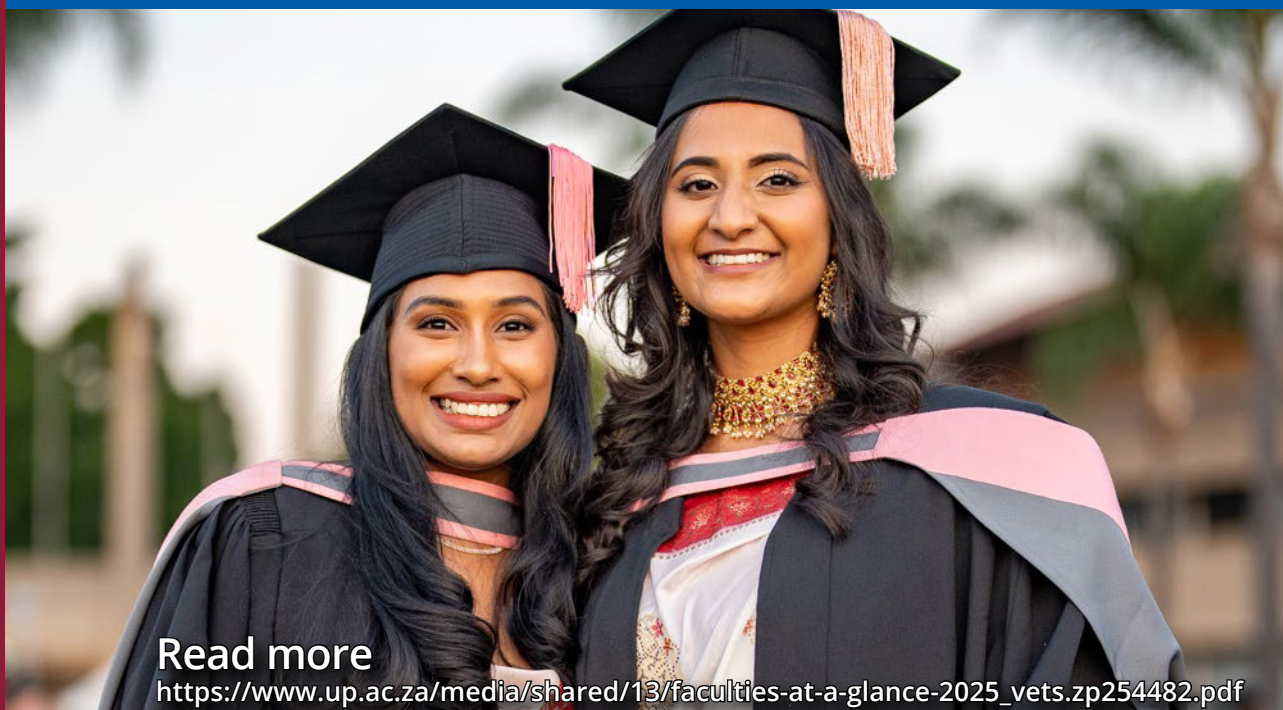
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2025

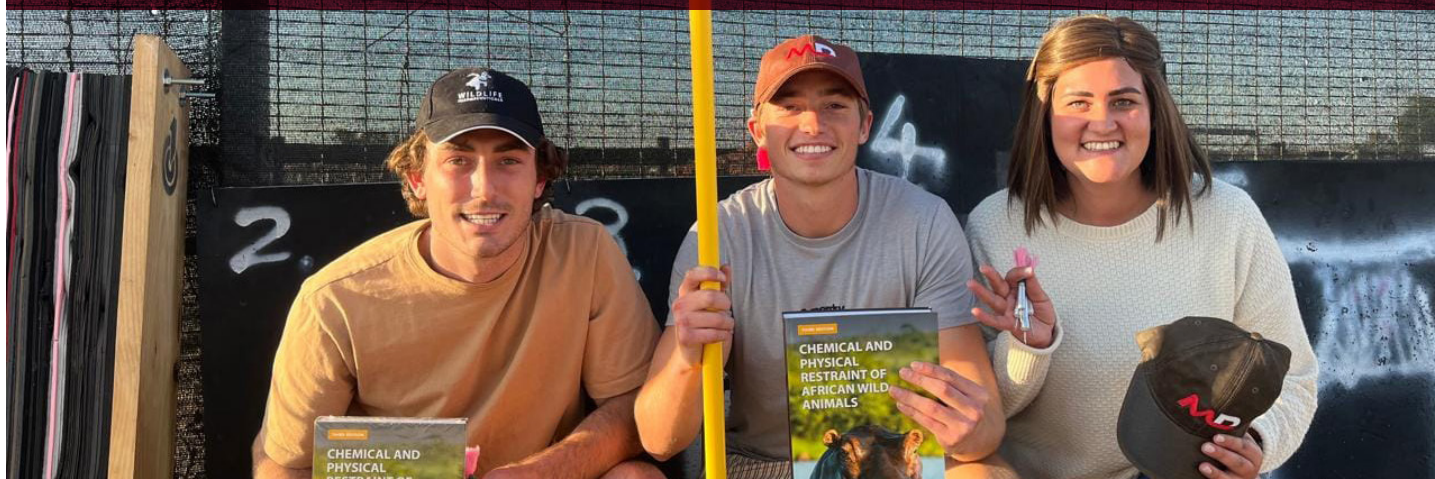
# FACULTY *AT a* GLANCE



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)

# Faculty's Wildlife Section hosts another successful Wildlife Technical Week



*The winner of the darting practical session, Nic Lonsdale (middle) together with Alex Schliemann (left, 2nd place) and Monica Boender (3rd place).*

The Faculty of Veterinary Science of the University of Pretoria in 2024 hosted its 2024 VEP Wildlife Technical Week. Organised by specialist wildlife veterinarian Dr Jacques O'Dell and the faculty's Wildlife Section, the annual event is a mix of applied lectures, case discussions and practical sessions. The Veterinary Elective Practice (VEP) module also forms part of the training of 5th and 6th year students of which 41 participated in this year's event.

Guest lecturers at the event included Dr Lufuno Netshitavhadulu from SANparks veterinary wildlife services, Dr Dewald Keet from the National Zoological Gardens, Dr Hendrik Hansen from Embryo Plus and Mr Craig Shepstone, owner of the Wildlife Nutrition Services company.

Sponsors of the week included Drs Michael Kock and Richard Burroughs, Wildlife Pharmaceuticals and Motsumi Darts (a company that is manufacturing remote drug delivery systems including darts shot from a dart rifle or projector). Wildlife Pharmaceuticals also ensured that each student gets a 'goodie' bag.

The darting practical session is always good fun and this year the competition was fierce. From the three groups eight finalists went through to sudden death rounds.

In the end, Nic Lonsdale walked away with first prize (a capture book, signed by Dr Richard

Burroughs and a pole syringe sponsored by Motsumi Darts). Second prize went to Alex Schliemann (a capture book, sponsored by Wildlife Pharmaceuticals). Third prize went to Monica Boender (a cap from Motsumi Darts)

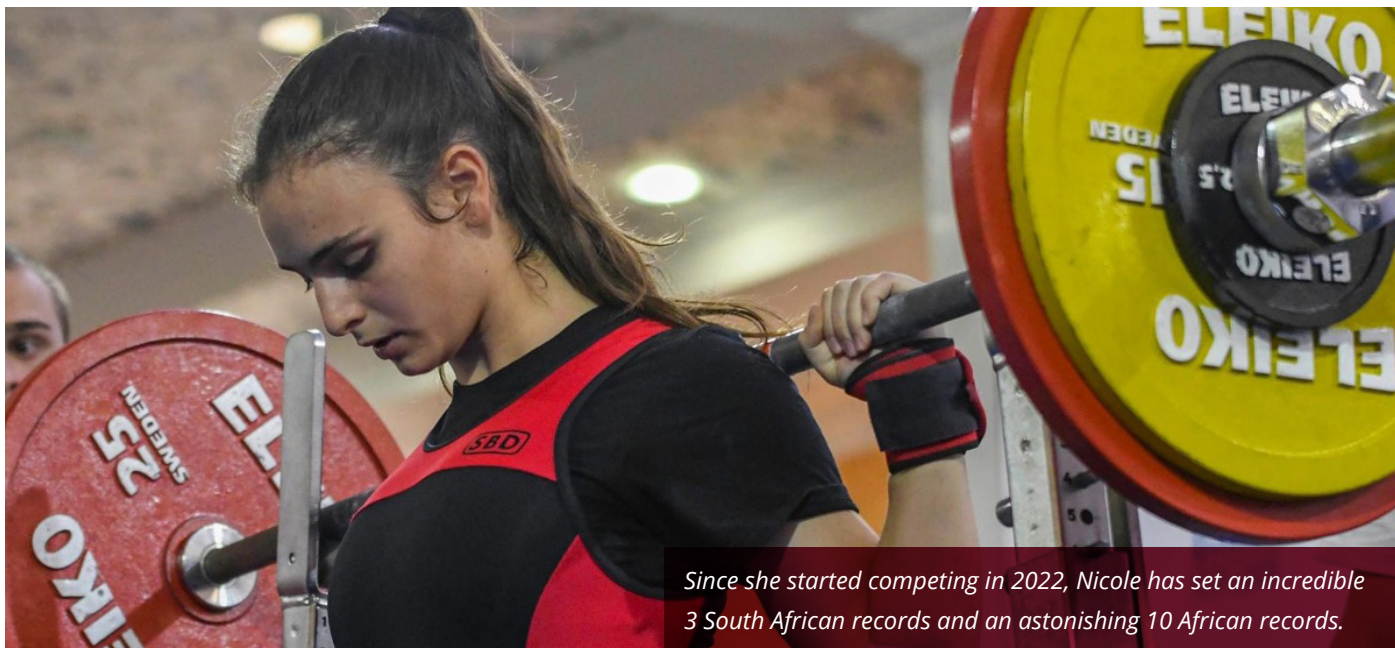
The best case-study presentation was that of group 2A consisting of Danielle Arnold, Thomas Saunders, Zaid Vawda, Alex Schliemann, Scott Cuthbert, Lee van der Mast and Nic Lonsdale who gave an excellent presentation on spotted hyena capture.

Tiara Govender won the lucky draw prize (a signed copy of the book 'Through My Eyes', written and sponsored by Dr Michael Kock)



*Students assisting their peers during the darting practical session.*

# Faculty's own powerlifting champ continues to excel



*Since she started competing in 2022, Nicole has set an incredible 3 South African records and an astonishing 10 African records.*

In 2023 we reported about Nicole Androulla Hasell, then a Bachelor of Veterinary Science student in her fourth year at the faculty who distinguished herself at the South African Powerlifting Championships. She was the top overall (across all weight classes and age groups) female student there and won the junior category (18 - 23 years) in the 57kg weight, among other things.

Now in her fifth year she has remarkably excelled even more after she decided to compete in both the classic and equipped powerlifting categories in the 57kg weight class. Since she started competing in 2022, Nicole has set an incredible 3 South African records and a staggering 10 African records.

In 2024 she won the Gauteng championships open and junior categories for normal classic powerlifting. She then outclassed her opponents in the junior division of classic powerlifting at the South African championships by winning the division and was placed 4th in the open division. She also won both the junior and open categories for the equipped 57kg weight class. In the process she broke the South African squat (147.5 kg), deadlift (158 kg) and total (388 kg) records.

Nicole also participated in the North West qualifier for equipped powerlifting and won both open and junior categories. Like the previous years since 2022 she once again qualified for the international team in 2024. She qualified for both the classic open world championships in Lithuania and the Africa Asia Pacific competition in Potchefstroom this year. Unfortunately, she did not attend these competitions due to a lack of funds and a clash with her exam season.

However, she also qualified for both the equipped and classic divisions of the junior world championships in Valetta, Malta that took place on 29 August. Here she again broke the South African records: Squat (150 kg), deadlift (160 kg) and total (400 kg). She furthermore ended 6th overall in the 57kg junior category and was placed 4th in the deadlifts.

Her most recent achievement came in the form of the Commonwealth championships which took place on 11 October 2024 at Sun City. Here she came second overall in the junior equipped powerlifting category. This year she was awarded protea colours in equipped powerlifting, while in 2023 and 2022 she was also awarded protea colours in classic powerlifting. She has made the faculty incredibly proud.

# Faculty's OPVSC shines at UP's 2024 Student Life Awards

The Faculty of Veterinary Science's 2023/2024 Onderstepoort Para-veterinary and Veterinary Student Committee (OPVSC) celebrated an excellence performance at the University of Pretoria's (UP) recent Student Life Awards ceremony on 16 October 2024.

The former committee made the faculty proud and won no less than five awards at the event which is annually hosted by UP's Department of Student Affairs (DSA).

In the Faculty House section, they were awarded the following:

- Best performance in Faculty Involvement
- Best performance in Personal and Professional Development
- Best performance in Community engagement (RAG)
- Best performance in Academic Support

In addition, the 2023/2024 OPVSC chairperson and representative for social media and marketing, Karabo Makgashula, was awarded the Change Maker Award.

The faculty's OPVSC handles all student-related matters on campus such as academic matters, social events and sports, to name a few. The committee acts as the voice of the student body and have direct contact with the staff and management of the faculty.



*Karabo Makgashula (middle), former OPVSC chairperson and social media and marketing representative receives the Change Maker award from Dr Kgadi Mathabathe, right (Dean of Students in the Department of Student Affairs) and Dr Willem Jorissen, Deputy Director in the Department of Student Affairs.*



*Nicola Janse van Rensburg, former OPVSC Academic representative receives the Best performance in Personal and Professional Development award on behalf of the OPVSC from Dr Willem Jorissen, Deputy Director in the Department of Student Affairs.*

## Faculty hosts yet another successful Faculty Day

The Faculty of Veterinary Science annually hosts its Faculty Day on the Onderstepoort campus. It is a proud tradition which aims to highlight the research activities of the faculty as well as exposing young researchers, postgraduate and final year undergraduate students to a conference environment when presenting their research in the form of oral presentations

and a poster session. It also provides an ideal opportunity for industry and our loyal sponsors to meet with our staff and to engage with our post- and undergraduate students as well as our alumni. The exciting event is always marked by various highlights and 2024's, opened by the Dean of the faculty, Prof Vinny Naidoo was no exception.



*Prof Lyndy McGaw (second from left) receives her Researcher of the Year 2024 award from the representative of MSD Animal Health, the sponsor of the prize. With them are Prof Vinny Naidoo (right), Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science and Prof Marinda Oosthuizen, Deputy Dean: Research and Postgraduate Studies in the faculty (left).*

An inspirational keynote lecture by Dr Mark Penning, alumnus and Vice President of Disney's Animals, Science and Environment team at Disney's Animal Kingdom in Orlando, Florida, captured the attention of those present. The title of his lecture was 'Animal Wellbeing beyond private practice – combining art and science.'

Joining the Walt Disney company in 2012, Dr Penning currently provides vision, leadership and strategic direction to a team of over 1000 animal care professionals, storytellers, and conservationists.

The successful day was concluded with the faculty's annual prize giving event to honour our top Faculty researchers.

Congratulations to the winner of the Researcher of the Year award for 2024, Prof Lyndy McGaw and the rest of the Top 10 researchers in the faculty:

**Rest of Top 10 Researchers:**

2. Prof Peter Thompson
3. Prof Geoffrey Fosgate
4. Prof Henriette van Heerden
5. Prof Leith Meyer
6. Prof Vinny Naidoo
7. Prof Luis Neves
8. Prof Marinda Oosthuizen
9. Prof Musafiri Karama
10. Shared position: Prof Amelia Goddard and Prof Anita Michel

Congratulations also to the Emerging Researcher of the Year, Dr Josef Hanekom.

**OTHER WINNERS**

- Best Undergraduate VRE Oral Presenter - Le Roux Pepler
- Best Postgraduate Poster - Megan Antrobus
- Runner-up - Khanyisane Ndwandwe
- Best Postgraduate Oral presenter - Dr Aneliza Smit
- Runner-up - Dr Yolandi Rautenbach

**To VIEW more photos of the event, click here: <https://bit.ly/4fWbUGq>**



*Dr Mark Penning (left), alumnus and Vice President of Disney's Animals, Science and Environment team based in Orlando, Florida receives the Lectori Salutem from the Dean of the Faculty, Prof Vinny Naidoo after he delivered the keynote lecture at Faculty Day 2024.*



*Dr Thembeke Mtetwa next to an immobilised rhino.*

## UP researchers discover an optimum way to monitor blood oxygen levels in immobilised rhino

New research by scientists at the University of Pretoria (UP) has shown that pulse oximeters, originally designed for humans, can be used to monitor the blood oxygen levels in rhinoceroses that are immobilised or under anaesthesia – by attaching them at an unusual site: the rhino's 'third eyelid'.

The new research by Dr Thembeke Mtetwa of the Faculty of Veterinary Science and her collaborators – the faculty's Professor Leith Meyer, Director of the faculty's Centre for Veterinary Wildlife Research, wildlife vet and physiologist; experimental physiologist Prof Ned Snelling (faculty); wildlife vet Dr Peter Buss of SANParks; wildlife vet Dr Annette Roug (Extraordinary Lecturer in the faculty); and ecophysiologist Dr Ashleigh Donaldson (faculty alumnus) – was recently published in the journal BMC Veterinary Research.

To read more about this research, click here <https://bit.ly/3X8N8vr>



*Prof Leith Meyer and Dr Annette Roug line up the oximeters and other equipment.*



*Inserting the pulse oximeter into the third eyelid. Photo credit: Prof Leith Meyer.*



*Getting a reading from the rhino's third eyelid. Photo credit: Prof Leith Meyer.*

# Small-scale farmer project

A training and skills development project for small-scale livestock farmers recently launched by the University of Pretoria's (UP) Faculty of Veterinary Science is helping farmers, contributing towards food security, economic growth and biosecurity, and putting the implementation of the national Agriculture and Agro-Processing Master Plan into action.

The new three-year project, launched in May 2024, provides training to previously disadvantaged small-scale livestock farmers in the communities surrounding mining operations in the Tswaing and JB Marks Local Municipalities (in the North West) and Fetakgomo Tubatse Local Municipality (in Limpopo).

The project forms part of the ongoing primary animal health care training programme, which has been running since 2011.

Small-scale livestock farmers experience various challenges, including lack of resources, poor infrastructure and, especially, poor knowledge of and skills in the best farming practices related to animal health and production, which often becomes a major hindrance to successful and profitable livestock production.

"Most of these farmers encounter various animal diseases and mortalities, with very low calving/ lambing percentages within their flocks/ herds as compared to the commercial sector, which poses a serious biosecurity risk to the national herd/flock in South Africa.

**[Click here to read how the training and skills development project is helping these farmers.](#)**



*Booklet given to small-scale farmers during training*



*One of the trainees practicing to use a thermometer*

## 34th UP Expert Lecture

*Harnessing molecular techniques to advance horse health.*

Presented by **Professor Alan Guthrie**  
Director of the Equine Research Centre  
in the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the  
University of Pretoria.

**Wednesday, 9 October 2024**  
**18:00 – 19:30**



On 9 October 2024 Prof Alan Guthrie, Director of the Equine Research Centre (ERC) at the faculty presented the 34th lecture in the UP Expert Lecture series titled “Harnessing molecular techniques to advance horse health.” Only two experts are chosen annually by the Vice-Chancellor of the university to present this prestigious lecture. Prof Guthrie was the first expert of this faculty to present this lecture since its inception.

**To watch this lecture please click on this link: <https://bit.ly/3ANPAz4>**

# OP News

## publication information

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**Editor:** Chris van Blerk

**Email:** [chris.vanblerk@up.ac.za](mailto:chris.vanblerk@up.ac.za)

**Layout and design:** Annalize de Klerk

**Email:** [apansegrouw@yahoo.com](mailto:apansegrouw@yahoo.com)



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