
EDITORIAL

A new era for the Journal of the South African Veterinary Association

Many things have changed in the world since the Journal of the South African Veterinary Association (JSAVA), or rather the Journal of the South African Veterinary Medical Association as it was called then, was established in August 1927.

The first volume was only published in 1930, hence the 93rd volume being published in this 95th year of its existence. It was during Prof. HPA DeBoom's second term as editor in 1972 that the association changed its name to the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) and the journal followed suit. It was felt that the use of the archaic and tautological additional adjective "Medical", which was often a source of confusion to the outsider, should be discontinued. I was quite surprised to learn that it was only under the editorship of Dr Joseph van Heerden, from 1987 to 1995, that peer-review was introduced for the first time. Prior to that, the review and editing of submissions were the responsibility of the editorial committee. It is difficult to imagine that, back then, paper copies of a manuscript were typed out on a typewriter, before being submitted in triplicate and distributed to reviewers by post.

After the death of Dr Colin Cameron in 2015, Dr van Heerden stepped in for a second term as editor. Once again he directed the journal to the next level by making it open-access. Open-access means that the content is available online to any reader, free of access charges or other barriers. Rather than readers having to pay subscription or pay-per-view charges, the publication of each manuscript is funded by the authors. Open-access allows the content to be read by a broader international audience. With the broader readership comes a greater chance of each published article being cited, and this increases the rating of a journal. The move to an open-access model is the primary reason the journal's impact factor has steadily risen from 0.44 in 2015 to 1.47 in 2022.

The downside of open-access is that the publishing costs for the author can be excessive (often between US\$2 500 and US\$4 000

per article for European or North American journals). Fortunately, we have managed to keep the JSAVA publishing costs down to R1 300 (excl. VAT) per published page, making the journal very competitive as a veterinary journal on the international stage. SAVA also pays the proportional publishing costs on behalf of its members. This benefit can be quite substantial for SAVA members who publish one or two articles in the journal per year.

While the JSAVA will always be a regional journal with a focus on veterinary issues specific to sub-Saharan Africa, the journal will consider manuscripts from a broad range of disciplines within the field of veterinary science. Southern Africa has a large number of veterinarians that focus partially or entirely on the care of wildlife species. The journal is therefore well positioned to publish research on a broad range of veterinary wildlife-related topics and it is our aim to prioritise this in the future. Several articles have been published recently on the immobilisation and translocation of wildlife, wildlife diseases and broader one-health topics. The journal will nevertheless continue to welcome submissions on a wide range of veterinary topics that are of interest to practising veterinarians.

In 2021, the JSAVA contracted Medpharm Publications to manage the online platform and review process as well as the publishing of accepted articles. Our desire to keep the publishing costs down was one reason for this move, but we also wanted to provide a more user-friendly platform for both authors and reviewers, while retaining editorial and publishing standards. All articles will still undergo double-blinded review by at least two independent reviewers. Finding suitable reviewers for certain niche veterinary fields is still a challenge, but we hope to reduce the administrative time taken between submission and the articles finally being published. It is our hope that at its centenary in 2027, the journal will be well worth celebrating.

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