

Community Engagement Newsletter



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Veterinary Science
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Engagement with livestock farmers – Rust De Winter

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There was quite a bite in the air; the temperature hovering somewhere around 8°C at 05:00 on that autumn morning. The aroma of fresh coffee permeated the atmosphere of subdued excitement on the busses – for today was the awaited livestock outreach to the Rust de Winter area. All the vaccines and other equipment were packed on to the busses and we were on our way!

My group, which consisted of myself and six other students from my class, were tasked with vaccinating approximately 600 cattle and 80 goats (divided between

The cold, grey dawn of the morning saw approximately half of the current 6th year students (BVSc III – old programme) slowly trundling down from the residence of the Onderstepoort (OP) Campus to the front parking lot of the Sir Arnold Theiler Building – some still rubbing sleep out of their eyes – whilst a few others drove in from outside the campus. A few vet nurses and vet students from other classes were also present that morning.

three farms) against anthrax, botulism and clostridial diseases; with additional deworming for the goats. We were encouraged by Dr Nenene Qekwana (OP Co-ordinator of the State Vet (Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) Annual Rural Community Initiative), to keep an open mind. He warned us that we might encounter animals being kept under a range of conditions, and that the cattle could be specifically aggressive because they are farmed extensively.

Upon arrival, I think most of us were struck by the bare “ruralness” of the area

– a quaint superette surrounded by a few houses and a copse of ancient, gnarled trees. Shortly afterwards, crews made up of locals supporting the initiative, together with DAFF members, set up portable toilets and catering facilities. Each of the groups were picked up by their respective farmers and they departed for the farms.

Arriving at the first farm, we waited for the herd boys to bring the cattle to the kraal. This gave us some time to set up our equipment. As the cattle approached, we were surprised at the good condition of the animals (Body Condition Score 4/5



OP students vaccinating cattle on rural farms.

on average) given the condition of the veld. There are acres of trees under which few tufts of grass grows in the red soil. Most of the cattle were Brahman or crosses thereof and their notorious tempers were truly evident that day!

The animals were divided more or less equally among the three farms we were to visit, with all the goats on the last farm. Later in the day, we learnt that the farmer had sold all his goats a few weeks prior. This meant that we only had to see cattle that day, but fate intervened.

At the gate to the second farm one of the cattlemen stood with a group of dogs. Upon closer inspection we noticed one of the dogs limping about. When we examining the dog, we discovered an open wound on the point of his left hock. Gaining some history from the owner, we learnt that the dog was attacked by a baboon a week before. Some of us remained behind to treat the dog and the rest attended to the cattle. With permission from the owner, the wound was cleaned, debrided and dressed; some analgesics were also administered to the dog. Everything was improvised: a muzzle fashioned out of a rectal glove and tape, the back of the vehicle as an instrument table and a jacket as the working table. He was a very friendly dog. He licked our fingers even though he was in pain. He had such soulful eyes without any sign of malice.

In the very last group of cattle to be vaccinated on the last farm

of the day, we noticed one of the heifers suffering a vaginal prolapse. Our efforts at manually reducing the prolapse were to no avail. An epidural and Bühner suture were indicated in the situation – and, taking into account her history of a prolapse and her being nulliparous, she was destined for the abattoir the following week.

Being rural farmers in remote areas, we were surprised at the facilities available for restraining and handling animals. The crushes and holding pens were constructed out of solid metal or stout wood. This made administering the vaccines much easier than anticipated – although the horns of the animals were intimidating at first.

This type of initiative is beneficial to all the parties involved. Students gain experience in dealing with animals under a variety of conditions and the farmers have access to primary health care for their herds. In future, if students across all classes are given the opportunity to attend projects like this, it will aid greatly in them gaining practical experience and exposure to the rural farming sector. Veterinarians from all sectors should also

avail themselves to supervise the students and provide expertise with more advanced procedures if necessary.

All those involved are eager to participate in these types of projects in future, despite the hard work.

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DONATIONS: All donations received will be used for community engagement purposes, specifically in less fortunate communities. Please contact one of the following people if you would like to donate money, dog food, collars, leashes, blankets or your time:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dr Rebone Moerane | 012 529 8464 | Chairperson: Community Engagement Committee | rebone.moerane@up.ac.za |
| Sr Sarah Johnson | 012 529 8387 | Liaison and Communication | sarah.johnson@up.ac.za |
| Mr Eugene Machimana | 012 529 8100 | Community Engagement Coordinator | eugene.machimana@up.ac.za |

A day in Mamelodi

Myra Marais (BVSc IV)

Our project took place at Boikgantsho Primary School in Mamelodi East, in partnership with the Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC) at the Mamelodi Campus, University of Pretoria.



OP students with members of the Mamelodi community.

Our first step, like all great tasks, was to lay the foundation. We met with Dr Jeanne Rudman, the head veterinarian of MAHC. She was able to enlighten us about different cases that she had seen in MAHC, as well as trends that she had picked up within the community. These include an inability to identify sick animals and a lack of knowledge of basic puppy care. She also felt that the public was unaware of the services that the MAHC had to offer. Mr Abram Kobo, the Principal of Boikgantsho Primary School and an upstanding member of the Mamelodi community, felt that it was necessary to promote good health and respect for the environment among the learners. It was on these grounds that we began to build our custom-made project.

We started our community project by presenting an interactive three-hour session filled with a variety of activities to the learners. We taught them how to identify a sick dog and care for a puppy. We also promoted the MAHC and the role veterinarians play in society.

This was an amazing afternoon. At one stage we had 300 learners chant back a war cry that we had taught them with so much fire. The Ann van Dyk Cheetah Centre joined in the fun, sending in Ms Rita Groenewald and her trusty side-kick Jedi, the Anatolian shepherd dog. She presented a section on our four-legged friends and instilled in the learners the importance of respect for one's environment. The significance of conservation was highlighted in particular. The learners were intrigued by Rita's excellent videos, depicting the great love between man and animals, and were

"The capacity to care is the thing that gives life its deepest significance"
– Pablo Casals



OP students at the "Dipping Day" at MAHC.

mesmerised by her general "awesomeness". They were then given the opportunity to interact with Jedi. With some 300 learners lining up to show Jedi some love, we had to wipe the tears from our eyes to see just how much joy this little act brought them. The way their faces lit up was truly a breathtaking moment – one that will forever be imprinted in our minds.

Subsequently, we had our "Dipping Day", a day that we had advertised to the learners and the community at large. It took place at MAHC and was a way to introduce the members of the public to the free dipping facility, as well as to point out the importance of ectoparasitic control in the health of their animals, thereby encouraging them to make regular use of this service in the hope of ultimately decreasing the number of tick-borne disease cases occurring in the community. It went without a hitch. We dipped close to 100 dogs that day, and also had the privilege of meeting so many more members of the community, both young and old. We shared a laugh or two and learned of their stories.

MEETING

Community Engagement Committee meeting will be held on Monday, 20 April 2015 at 13:30.

A day in Mamelodi (continued)

At our very first meeting as a group, despite all our differences, the one thing that we agreed on without a doubt was the fact that community engagement is a selfless deed: one that requires oneself to give everything one has; not only for the good of the community involved, but also for oneself. It also involves being able to walk away, smiling, knowing that we had learnt something from the community that would affect the way we saw life forever. Our goal was to leave something and be left with something. Looking back at our project, we can do nothing but smile. Our eyes have been opened to see how much love was shown to us by the Mamelodi community, how they were all so willing and eager to see what we had to bring

to the table, and in return teach us their ways and explain their views to us. We were taken by surprise at the perfect English the learners spoke, how fast they caught onto concepts and how they welcomed new challenges with outstretched arms. Above all, one thing was most prominent – the love of man’s best friend. To see the dedication and true passion displayed towards their dogs was indescribable. We are still speechless! It was unmistakably reflected in the dogs – a picture of happiness showing nothing but utmost loyalty towards their owners.

Boikgantsho Primary School and MAHC will always hold a special place in our hearts and we look forward to many more happy memories with them.

A day at the zoo

Tandile Ndobeni, Jayde Flax, Johan Jordaan Karli du Preez, and Vanessa Salisbury (BVS IV)

For our community engagement project we took a group of learners from the Laerskool Louis Leipoldt to the Johannesburg Zoo for a day of education and fun.

The theme for our community engagement project was animal enrichment. We educated the learners about the importance of enriching the environment of an animal kept in captivity so as to avoid adverse behaviour and conditions.

The project made an impact on the lives of all the parties involved in the following ways:

- **Learners and parents:**
 - Learners had a fun-filled and educational day at the zoo.
 - Parents were given the opportunity to catch up on other tasks that they do not usually have time for while their children were at the zoo.
- **Vet students:**
 - We were able to teach the learners about something that we are passionate about, while having the opportunity to learn from them and the staff at the zoo.
- **Animals:**
 - The animals were entertained by the environmental enrichment activities that we performed with the learners.
 - We made fruit kebabs, oatee necklaces and peanut butter smears for the chimpanzees and hid these all over their enclosure.
 - For the lions, we distributed raw meat and chicks throughout the enclosure. We also scented the surroundings with elephant dung, lavender and rosemary.

The tour provided us with an in-depth and unique experience of the zoo and its animals. It was very rewarding to work with the less fortunate learners and to see the joy a day at the zoo could bring them. We are really grateful for having been given this opportunity and enjoyed making a difference in the learners’ and animals’ lives. We would like to thank everyone involved!



Laerskool Louis Leipoldt learners busy with an environmental enrichment activity.



OP students and Laerskool Louis Leipoldt learners with their environmental enrichment supplies.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Event	Venue	Date
Production Animal Outreach Clinic	Makapanstad and Ratjiepan Project	Wednesdays
Mamelodi Animal Health Care (MAHC)	Mamelodi Campus	Mondays to Fridays
Loate Community Veterinary Clinic	Winterveldt	Twice a month on Wednesdays



DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO PUBLISH?

The Community Engagement Committee invites you to submit short articles to be published in the next Community Engagement Newsletter. The community engagement article should not be more than one page in length. Contact person:

Eugene Machimana
 Tel: 012 529 8100 (w)
 Email: eugene.machimana@up.ac.za

Visit the UP Community Engagement website regularly for updates about projects and funding opportunities.