

# Community Engagement Newsletter

Faculty of Veterinary Science  
Summer 2012



## VISITING MAMELODI SCHOOLS

Anne Schantz (BVSc I)

As part of our CPE 400 project (Companion Animal Ethology, Handling, Nutrition and Welfare) we worked with the new Mamelodi Animal Health Clinic (MAHC) run by Dr Cherrie Liebenberg of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the Mamelodi Campus.

With the much appreciated help of Mr Eugene Machimana, we gave talks to different high schools close to the UP Mamelodi Campus. On Friday, 27 May 2011, we made presentations to 28 Grade 8 learners at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom High School. On Tuesday, 31 May, we made presentations to 220 Grade 9 learners at the Ribanelaka High School. The presentation lasted approximately 45 minutes, during which we covered the basics of dog care and welfare.



The presentations focused only on dogs, with content concentrated on basic health care (ticks, fleas and worms; vaccination and sterilization), basic needs (access to water and food), welfare (dog fighting, tail docking and ear cropping) and interactive Q's and A's aimed at keeping the learners engaged. Questions were posed and learners answering and asking further questions were given sweets and dog treats as incentives for participating. At the end of the presentations, a few minutes were devoted to the possibility of Veterinary Science as a career choice, with a number of learners voicing interest. Dr Cherrie Liebenberg played a key role in the presentation, as one of the objectives of the project was to inform the community about the MAHC. Her presence at the presentation was a boost for the clinic in the eyes of the community, and was much appreciated by all of us. In addition, time was dedicated to handing out pamphlets about the clinic at an intersection near the



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campus.

Our project aimed to make a small yet strong impact on the community of Mamelodi. Focusing on the Grade 8 and 9 learners was fuelled by the hope that they will spread the knowledge they gained during these presentations to their friends and families in the community at large. Moreover, as a group we feel that if one dog-fighting ring had been stopped or if one dog now receives better care, we have accomplished more than what we have set out to do.

One other important aspect is that Grade 9 learners have boundless future possibilities in any field of study of their choice. By doing these presentations we have given them the option of an additional possible career to pursue. The community as a whole was very welcoming, and the principal of the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom High School was adamant that we should make a presentation to a different grade in the near future. He was especially interested in our promotion of veterinary science as a field of study as it is not a well-known profession in the area.

The response we received from the community while

handing out pamphlets was very uplifting. The people were very curious and enthusiastic about the new clinic. This project was an eye-opener for all of us at Mamelodi, an area that only a few of us know. The Mamelodi community was very welcoming and willing to listen and learn, but they also taught us humility. We would probably not have done this project if it had not been part of CPE 400, and we are all very grateful that we had this opportunity. As many of our colleagues also had equivalent projects at different schools in disadvantaged areas, we hope to draw together and form a group that can visit schools on a regular basis. Everyone is most welcome to join!

We need to share with our communities the passion and dedication we have. We are privileged to have such a great career and great positions in our lives. Let us not forget to give some of it back to the communities around us.

Please contact one of the following people if you would like to donate money, dog food, collars, leashes, baskets, or your time:

Sr Sarah Johnson (012) 529 8387 / 079 183 1878 sarah.johnson@up.ac.za

Mr Jacques van Rooyen (012) 529 8339 / 083 289 1312 jacques.vanrooyen@up.ac.za

Mr Eugene Machimana (012) 529 8100 /083 687 0181 eugene.machimana@up.ac.za

## THE PRESENCE OF TOXIC PLANTS IN ZOO ENCLOSURES AND THEIR EFFECT ON HERBIVORES WITHIN THESE ENCLOSURES

Gillian Declercq, Shreya Venkatkumar, Storm van Tonder & Thandi Fourie (BVSc I)

### Introduction

The presence of toxic plants in zoo enclosures is not only a threat to the animals and their welfare, but also compromises the aesthetic value of the enclosures. Apart from toxic plants causing various poisonings, they are usually invasive, spread rapidly and compete with the indigenous flora for nutrients. Enclosures have to be attractive to viewers, to entice them to return and encourage friends and family to do the same. In order to collect money, and more importantly, to develop an appreciation, respect and awareness of nature and conservation, it is essential to attract visitors to the zoo. Several toxic plants were found in the antelope section, which is under the care of Mr Phuti Maffodi. These plants compromise the habitat suitability of the enclosure and this may have ecological and biological implications for the antelope and zebra kept in these enclosures.



The plants that were found in some of the antelope enclosures include *Lantana camara*, *Datura ferox*, *Gomphocarpus fruticosus*, *Solanum pseudocapsicum* and *Acacia nilotica*.

*Lantana camara* (Lantana) and *Datura ferox* (thorn apple, jimson weed) occur as invasive weeds in large parts of South Africa. There is a high density of *Lantana camara* in the mixed camp of the springbok, lechwe, blesbok, and kudu. Ingestion of the leaves and fruit may cause liver damage and jaundice, with resulting photosensitivity. Symptoms include severe sunburn on unpigmented skin, loss of appetite, constipation, and possibly death, depending on the dose ingested. Lantana forms thickets that cause habitat destruction and competes with the native plant species. The presence of these plants reduces the animals' habitat safety.



## Conclusion

The effects of toxic plants on the animals that consume them may be life-threatening and should well be avoided whenever possible. Indigenous animals are less likely to consume toxic plants but if they do, the results cannot be predicted and it is not worthwhile taking the risk. It is for this reason that removal and control of all toxic plant species should be exercised if they are identified where animals have access to them.

## ISUZU VET BOOKS FOR AFRICA... WILL THE DREAM BECOME A REALITY?

### Ben Muller (BVSc I)

Lying in bed one fateful morning, trying to get myself up and let my feet drag me to class, my pondering session hit a crossroad. Books for Africa, the group of seven students who had been selected for 2012, is nearly 20 years old! This constitutes almost 20 years of route planning, event organising, cleaning out of clubhouses and knocking on donor doors, and almost 20 years of bi-annual trips to our neighbours north of us. But more importantly, it constitutes almost 20 years of strengthening ties between our fellow veterinary students in neighbouring countries and sharing our knowledge with them in the form of books, guides and learning material – something which I think many students sometimes take for granted here in South Africa. Many of those universities have small or non-existent libraries and many of the books are outdated. The feedback from previous donations has been tremendous and some of the universities even take the initiative to ask for certain books they need (such as the much-coveted Merck Manuals!)

VBFA is not just only about the books. During past excursions, our brother groups have donated microscopes and non-prescription medications as well. The 2010 group also helped a farmer by performing 400 rectal palpations for him in his Boran herd. Spending time at animal welfare organisations was always well received, and gave the students some insight into how things are run in another country from a vet's perspective. I think a large part of the project is not just about the charity, but also about spending time and sharing ideas and passions with people who have the same interests. This is what the 2010 team

experienced at the very first university they visited in Maputo. The 2012 team is very keen to engage in more community projects within our borders, to try to establish a better local reputation.

The project is solely reliant on donor money, which makes the two years leading up to the trip rather nerve wrecking (but it's all part of the excitement, I suppose!). We are hoping to raise another R80 000 before the end of next year to make the trip a success. The group of 2010 had the great fortune of being sponsored two Isuzu KB D-Teq 300 LX double-cab bakkies by General Motors and Isuzu. The vehicles' performance was so good that it was not even necessary to change any tyres over the 12 500 km journey! Countries and their respective organisations and veterinary faculties that will benefit from our trip include Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, and Uganda. There have also been talks of late of sending material by post to two recently opened faculties in Ghana as well.

So, I still find myself lying in bed, looking up at posters of wild animals running through the African wilds, wondering if the dream will become a reality.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

1. Production Animal Outreach Clinic: Makapanstad & Ratjjepan Project: Wednesdays
2. Mamelodi Animal Health Care (MAHC): Mondays to Fridays
3. Loate CVC: Bi-monthly on Wednesdays



The Community Engagement Committee invites you to submit short articles to be published in the next Newsletter (Autumn 2012). The Community Engagement article should not be more than 1 page long. Contact person Mr Eugene Machimana Tel: (012) 529 8100 (w) Cell: 083 687 0181 Email: [eugene.machimana@up.ac.za](mailto:eugene.machimana@up.ac.za)

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

