

NEWS RELEASE

Yorkshire Terrier receives life-saving tracheal stent at UP's Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital



Dr Liana Coetzee giving Mia some much needed, pre-procedure reassurance

ONDERSTEPSPOORT, TSHWANE – A six-year-old Yorkshire Terrier named Mia has made a successful recovery after receiving a tracheal stent at the [University of Pretoria's \(UP\) Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital \(OVAH\)](#).

Mia had been suffering from a severe case of tracheal collapse, which occurs when the trachea (windpipe) becomes flattened, obstructing airflow and leading to symptoms like coughing, cyanosis (blue gums), and syncope (fainting).

"Typically, tracheal collapse is managed with medication, but Mia's severe condition, which caused cyanosis during car rides, led the team to consider a tracheal stent," said [Dr Adriaan Kitshoff](#) from the OVAH's Small Animal Surgery team, who led the procedure. "A stent is a spring-like device designed to hold the trachea open, preventing collapse and improving airflow to the lungs."

Mia's owners first sought help at the OVAH Outpatients department in September 2024 when she was having difficulty breathing. After extensive testing, including blood work, X-rays, heart scans, and a bronchoscopy, the OVAH veterinarians diagnosed her with grade IV tracheal collapse (more than 75% collapse of the trachea). Mia's episodes, as is common in affected dogs, are often triggered by excitement, stress, or pressure on the trachea.

The procedure

Under general anaesthesia, Mia's trachea was carefully measured using X-rays, under the lead of Dr Adriaan Kitshoff, Small Animal Specialist Surgeon. The appropriate stent size was ordered from the USA, as these specialised devices are not kept on hand at OVAH due to their cost and infrequent use.

When the stent arrived in November, Small Animal Internal Medicine Resident Dr Liana Coetzee re-evaluated Mia. The procedure, led by Dr Kitshoff with assistance from Dr Coetzee, involved carefully placing the stent via an endotracheal tube into Mia's trachea. The anaesthesiology team, under the watchful eye of veterinary specialist anaesthesiologist Dr Chris Blignaut, closely monitored the patient throughout the procedure. Precision was paramount, as the stent cannot be repositioned after it is deployed beyond 50%.

The procedure was successful, and Mia recovered quickly. She was monitored overnight in the Intensive Care Unit and discharged the following day for ongoing care.

Risks and outlook

Tracheal stents are typically considered only when other treatment options have failed, with the goal of improving airflow and quality of life. While the procedure carries risks, including respiratory infections, stent displacement, stent fracture and the potential need for additional stents, Mia's successful recovery offers hope for other dogs with severe tracheal collapse.

"This procedure was a collaborative effort between several OVAH departments, including Small Animal Medicine, Small Animal Surgery, Anaesthesiology, and Diagnostic Imaging," Dr Coetzee said. "It's a prime example of the teamwork and dedication that make such complex procedures possible. We wish Mia many more happy years with her family!"

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ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

The University of Pretoria (UP) is one of the largest contact and residential universities in South Africa, with its administration offices located on its Hatfield Campus in Pretoria. This 115-year-old institution is also one of the largest producers of research in South Africa.

Spread over seven campuses, it has nine faculties and a business school, the [Gordon Institute of Business Science](#) (GIBS). It is the only university in the country with a [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#), which is ranked the best in Africa. UP has 120 academic departments and 92 centres and institutes, accommodating more than 56 000 students and offering about 1 100 study programmes. It has the most academic staff with PhDs (70%), NRF-rated researchers (613).

The 2025 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of [Accounting](#) and [Finance](#); [Architecture](#); [Electrical and Electronic Engineering](#); Law; Sport Science; and Veterinary Science. UP's Faculty of Law has been ranked as the top law school in Africa for a remarkable eighth consecutive year.

Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) ranked the University among the top five in Africa, as part of their [2024 World University Rankings \(WUR\)](#). UP was the only South African university featured in the [2023 World University Rankings for Innovation \(WURI\)](#), falling within in the 101-200 range of innovative universities.

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