

NEWS RELEASE

UP and Royal Canin launch Gauteng's first gold status cat-friendly clinic



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PRETORIA - This week, the University of Pretoria's (UP) [Faculty of Veterinary Science](#) launched Gauteng's first – and South Africa's second – gold status cat-friendly clinic at its [Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital](#) (OVAH). This international accreditation, awarded by the [International Society of Feline Medicine](#) (ISFM) through the [iCatCare Veterinary Society](#), recognises veterinary clinics that meet the highest global standards in feline care, handling and clinical design.

This milestone positions OVAH as a national leader in feline health and veterinary education, while reaffirming UP's commitment to excellence in animal welfare and One Health, a collaborative approach that aims for the best health outcomes by acknowledging the connections between human, animal and environmental health.

The new facility follows the first gold status cat-friendly clinic in South Africa, which was awarded to [Midlands Veterinary Hospital](#) in Howick, KwaZulu-Natal in 2024.

"This achievement reflects the University's dedication to clinical service, the well-being of all animals, and training future veterinarians to the highest standard," said [Dr Alfred Kgasi](#), Director of OVAH. "It's also a great example of what we can accomplish through strong collaborations, in this case, with [Royal Canin](#)."

Royal Canin, which specialises in nutritional products for cats and dogs, is a key partner in the project. The cat-friendly clinic programme was created to improve the veterinary experience for cats and their owners by offering facilities that minimise stress for feline patients. It provides species-specific care and serves as a training ground for veterinary students, exposing them to feline-focused clinical practice and research. It also strengthens UP's research efforts into feline diseases, behaviour and stress-reduction strategies.

Gold status – the ISFM's highest level of certification – requires rigorous compliance with the international society's best-practice guidelines across three key areas:

- **Clinic design and facilities.** The clinic should have dedicated cat-only spaces, and separate waiting and consultation rooms that are designed to reduce stress through careful regulation of sound, smell and sight.
- **Veterinary knowledge and skills:** Ongoing professional development in feline-specific medicine, behaviour and handling techniques is required of veterinarians.
- **Cat-centric care approach:** Gentle handling, minimal restraint and empathetic communication with cat caregivers are embedded into every stage of treatment.

The launch of OVAH's cat-friendly clinic drew dignitaries from both national and provincial government, including Vuyiswa Ramokgopa, MEC for Agriculture and Rural Development in Gauteng. Senior UP staff as well as international and local representatives from Royal Canin also attended the event. Faculty staff included [Professor Marinda Oosthuizen](#), Deputy Dean of Research and Postgraduate Studies; [Lizette Neethling](#), OVAH manager; and [Marizelle De Clercq](#), first veterinary nurse at OVAH.

"As a cat parent, this clinic means the world to me," said De Clercq, who was one of the speakers at the launch. "It's a place where cats are truly understood, and treated with the compassion and respect they deserve. It will make a real difference, not only to our feline patients, but to those of us who care deeply for them."

She will be part of a dedicated team of "catvocates" – trained veterinary professionals including vets, veterinary nurses and reception staff who will champion feline care to the highest standard at the clinic.

"Our team will operate with 'cattitude'," De Clercq added. "That means a deep understanding of feline needs, combined with ongoing training and a commitment to constantly improving the clinic and our protocols."

With this achievement, UP continues to redefine veterinary excellence in South Africa, not just for cats, but for the caregivers and professionals who are dedicated to their health and well-being.

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>> Watch a short video about the facility [here](#).

Photo captions

- **Photo 1** - Sponsie the cat poses for a photo in one of the consultation rooms of the new facility, specifically designed with cats in mind.
- **Photo 2** - Sr Jancke Loggerenberg, OVAH First Veterinary Nurse with a patient in a consultation room. The clinic was specifically designed with cats in mind.

- **Photo 3** – The ceremonial ribbon is jointly cut to signify the official opening of the new Gold Status CFC in the OVAH. From left to right are Ursula Ndhlovu, Corporate Affairs Director, Royal Canin South Africa, Dr Wynton Rabolao, Director: Veterinary Public Health and Export Facilitation, Gauteng Province, Mr Frank Chadinha, General Manager, Royal Canin South Africa, Mr Carlos Andres-Luna, Royal Canin Regional President, Rapid Growth Markets (France), Dr Alfred Kgasi, Director of the OVAH and the Hon. MEC for Agriculture & Rural Development in Gauteng, Ms Vuyiswa Ramokgopa.
- **Photo 4** – Dr Alfred Kgasi, Director of the OVAH (left) with the Gold Status accreditation certificate together with the Hon. MEC for Agriculture & Rural Development in Gauteng, Ms Vuyiswa Ramokgopa (middle) and Mr Carlos Andres-Luna, Royal Canin Regional President, Rapid Growth Markets (France).
- **Photo 5** – The Hon. MEC for Agriculture & Rural Development in Gauteng, Ms Vuyiswa Ramokgopa shares a light moment with Sponsie in one of the new consultation rooms.
- **Photo 6** - The entrance to the new Gold Status Cat-Friendly Clinic.

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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. 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 \(THE\) Impact Rankings](#) placed UP 7th globally for Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17: Partnerships for the Goals, recognising the University's leadership in building impactful global collaborations. UP also ranked 41st in the world and 1st in Africa and South Africa for SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, and maintained its position as the second-highest ranked university overall in both Africa and South Africa.

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.

In the [2025 QS World University Subject Rankings](#), UP is ranked in the top 100 in the world in Mineral & Mining Engineering (41), Veterinary Science (51–60), and Development Studies (51–100). Six UP subjects are ranked No. 1 in South Africa: Mechanical Engineering, Veterinary Science, Mathematics, Accounting & Finance, Business & Management Studies, and Economics & Econometrics.

For more information, please go to www.up.ac.za