

## NEWS RELEASE

### Veterinary milestone: UP graduates 100th class of animal health experts



*Celebrating the graduation of the 100th Veterinary Science class for the University of Pretoria*

PRETORIA – South Africa’s only Veterinary Science university faculty has just graduated its 100th class – a historic moment for the University of Pretoria (UP) and animal health in Africa.

UP’s Faculty of Veterinary Science celebrated this major milestone on 9 May 2025, when it capped its 100th Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) class during the University’s Autumn 2025 graduation season.

“The graduation of our 100th Veterinary Science class is a testament to the enduring legacy and future promise of veterinary science in South Africa,” said Professor Vinny Naidoo, Dean of the University of Pretoria’s Faculty of Veterinary Science and Professor in Veterinary Pharmacology, in an interview before the ceremony. “UP-trained veterinarians have helped South Africa gain a reputation for producing world-class veterinary research and

scientific advancement. This is a proud moment for the University, the Faculty, and all the veterinarians and other professional staff who have contributed to the training of our students over more than 100 years.”

### **History of UP’s Faculty of Veterinary Science**

UP’s Faculty of Veterinary Science was founded when the then Transvaal University College (TUK) admitted its first veterinary student in 1920, in a little-known area on the farm ‘De Onderstepoort’ in Pretoria. Five years later, at the end of 1924, the first veterinary students graduated – and every year since then, except for 1979, a new class has graduated. In 1979 the programme changed from five year to seven years, so there was no graduation in that year to accommodate the change-over.

“While the training of vets has been a collaborative effort between government and the University over this period, we must also thank our communities in the north of Pretoria who have made use of our Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital in its various forms,” Prof Naidoo said. “Their trust in our students in training, staff veterinarians, specialists and facilities has greatly benefited the country.”

Veterinarians have made significant contributions to South Africa over the years, Prof Naidoo said. “One of the most notable impacts has been the work of the first Dean of the Faculty, Sir Arnold Theiler. His pioneering efforts paved the way for the development of the first truly effective Rinderpest vaccine, which was instrumental in eradicating this devastating disease. Since then, further advancements in the chemical immobilisation of wildlife have greatly improved the care and management of South Africa’s iconic wildlife species.”

### **Recognising the role of veterinarians**

Veterinarians are the “unsung heroes of animal and human health”, Prof Naidoo said, explaining that their contributions to animal health, public health and the environment are often overlooked. “As we mark this special occasion, we honour the dedication and hard work of veterinarians who strive to improve the lives of animals and, by extension, the well-being of our communities.”

He said the graduation of the 100th Veterinary Science class should also serve to highlight the importance of animals in South Africa, from working animals on farmlands to beloved family pets and iconic wildlife. “Imagine South Africa without its diverse animal population: it would be a country devoid of its rich natural heritage and agricultural productivity.”

Veterinarians also contribute significantly to the economy by ensuring the health and productivity of livestock, which is crucial for food security and export earnings. The livestock sector, including cattle, poultry and other animals, is a major contributor to South Africa’s gross domestic product (GDP). “Moreover, veterinarians play a key role in controlling zoonotic diseases – illnesses that can be transmitted between animals and humans – which can have severe economic impacts if not managed properly. Major advancements over the years have included the use of vaccinations to prevent diseases, medications to treat illnesses, and the management of painful conditions through the introduction of analgesic drugs. These efforts have significantly enhanced the quality of life for many animals across the country.”

Prof Naidoo also highlighted advancements in veterinary medicine over the past 105 years since the Faculty’s founding. “These improvements have focused on enhancing our pets’ lives,” he said. “Today, pets enjoy better disease prevention, nutrition and state-of-the-art care. South Africa boasts advanced veterinary hospitals, including the University of Pretoria’s Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital, where cutting-edge medicine is practised. This now includes the use of advanced prosthetics to assist in cases of physical deformities and injuries, as well as neurological and cardiac surgery.”

## Vets, the economy and food security

Looking ahead, Prof Naidoo says vets have a major role to play if South Africa aims to increase its agricultural GDP over the next decade. “We also need to consider that more than 60% of Africa’s population is under the age of 25. This youthful demographic – which represents a unique opportunity for growth and innovation – must have access not only to good-quality food but also to affordable food. Veterinarians, as part of this dynamic workforce, can contribute significantly to improving animal health and welfare, which in turn will support agricultural productivity and economic growth.”

As the Faculty of Veterinary Science enters its second century of graduating classes, it aims to remain at the forefront of veterinary education and practice. “Our focus will be on training future veterinarians to meet the needs of the country, whether in welfare medicine, rural medicine or pet care. The Faculty also looks forward to further integrating artificial intelligence and technology to improve animal care in South Africa,” Prof Naidoo said. “We are proud to play our part in training the future generations of veterinarians who will help build on our existing and strong foundation of knowledge to help improve veterinary science not only for South Africa and our animals, but also for African and global citizens and animals around the world.”

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**Media enquiries** can be directed to Mr Sashlin Girraj - Public Relations & Events Manager

Email: [sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za](mailto:sashlin.girraj@up.ac.za) | Cell: +27(0)72 447 3784

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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.

For more information, please go to [www.up.ac.za](http://www.up.ac.za)