



NEWS RELEASE

Pick n Pay and MRI Whale Unit Partner to 'Save the Whales'



The 'Save the Whale' bags which are now available in Pick n Pay stores

PRETORIA - 'Save the Whales' is more than another call by environmental activists. The retail giant Pick n Pay has partnered with the University of Pretoria's (UP) Mammal Research Institute (MRI) Whale Unit to create their latest unique reusable bag to raise funds and create more awareness about the research of the Whale Unit on the southern right whales.

The bags, with beautiful photos of whales, include the names of the 11 southern right whales tagged in October 2023. Customers can learn more about the cause through a QR code on the bag, providing real-time tracking of the whales' migration.

With R100,000 of the proceeds from the 'Save the Whales' bags dedicated to the MRI Whale Unit, customers will play a crucial role in supporting marine research. Dr. Els Vermeulen, Research Manager of the MRI Whale Unit, emphasises the importance of customer awareness, stating that the bags also contain exciting facts about the whales, making every purchase an educational journey.

The MRI Whale Unit advances the knowledge and conservation of southern Africa's diverse whale and dolphin fauna. Every year, it conducts an [aerial survey](#) to monitor numbers of breeding southern right whales along South Africa's southern Cape coast. "The breeding females have dropped 23% in body weight since the late 1980s. This has led to worrying changes in breeding females' reproduction and body conditions, particularly over the past 13 years. This needs further research, but it seems that ocean warming decreases suitable habitat for krill to reproduce, which the whales feed on," says Vermeulen.

"This bag will not only raise awareness but also get the Whale Unit much-needed funds to continue its work," adds Vermeulen.

Throughout the year, Pick n Pay partners with local organisations to create these bags, which help support and promote their worthy cause while driving sustainable customer behaviour and action. To date, 22 organisations have been supported, and almost one million of these reusable bags have been sold. These bags are made from four locally collected 500ml recycled PET bottles, encouraging a circular economy by turning used plastic into something reusable. This effort has saved four million plastic bottles from going to landfills or ending in the ocean.

Vaughan Pierce, Executive: ESG at Pick n Pay, underscores the collaborative effort needed for impactful change. "By partnering with incredible organisations like this and our customers, we can make a bigger impact and create a better tomorrow."

The reusable bags initiative has already left positive marks, from contributing to the restoration of Muizenberg and St James' beach huts to supporting an injured rugby player from the Chris Burger Petro Jackson Players' Fund with a wheelchair from the iconic Springbok rPET bag.

The 'Save the Whale' bags are now available in Pick n Pay stores nationwide and cost R40 per bag, with proceeds going to the MRI Whale Unit.

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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 2024 Times Higher Education subject rankings placed UP first in South Africa in the fields of Law, Veterinary Science, Accounting and Finance; Agriculture and Forestry and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. 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