



NEWS RELEASE

UP unveils largest CT scanner for veterinary practice in South Africa



OVAH sisters prep a scottish terrier (an OVAH patient) before it receives a CT scan

PRETORIA - The University of Pretoria's (UP) Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital (OVAH) has recently revealed the largest CT scanner ever used in veterinary practice in South Africa. Made possible by a generous R13 million donation from the Roy McAlpine Charitable Foundation. Given that the Faculty of Veterinary Science at UP is the sole veterinary school in the country and the second oldest on the continent, the state-of-the-art scanner will undoubtedly advance the training of veterinary specialists, clinical research capabilities and innovation coming from UP.

Part of the donation was used to make some changes to the existing CT room to accommodate the new and bigger Siemens Somatom Confidence 64 Slice CT scanner with sliding gantry (a gantry that runs on a set of rails). To perform a CT scan, done to visualise an entire area of the body (e.g., head and neck), the patient usually is placed on table that moves through the gantry, which works well on smaller animals such as dogs. To be able to perform CT scans of the limbs as well as the head and neck of large animals like horses or buffalos, a CT scanner with sliding gantry is required, allowing the gantry to move along the body of the animal either in standing position or placed on a static table.

“As a referral and research centre the Faculty of Veterinary Science at UP the OVAH have to be at the forefront of diagnostics,” Professor Themba Mosia, UP Interim Vice-Chancellor and Principal, said. “A certain subset of cases are dependent on CT (computed tomography) for time and cost-effective diagnosis of suspected conditions. These include, but are not limited to, small animal cases with suspected nasal pathology, equine cases with suspected dental and sinus pathology, and small animal cases with intra-thoracic and -abdominal vascular anomalies. We are grateful and commend the Roy McAlpine Charitable Foundation for helping us purchase a machine that allows us to obtain high-quality, diagnostic images at a reduced scan time. It increases throughput and improves diagnostic accuracy, to the benefit of the patient, client and clinical team.”

Scotland-born Roy McAlpine, Founder of the Roy McAlpine Charitable Foundation, said the donation of the funds represent an example of how public private partnerships can play an important role in enhancing our educational and other key institutions.

“The importance of protecting our environment and wildlife for future generations cannot be underestimated” McAlpine said. “I have been fortunate in having lived in this country throughout my adult life. It has given me a wonderful life, for which I am very grateful. In founding this Foundation, my aim was, and remains, to give something back.”

Prof Vinny Naidoo, Dean of Faculty of Veterinary Science, and Dr Paul van Dam, Acting Director for Onderstepoort Veterinary Academic Hospital, said as with modern training facilities, imaging has been core to what can be done, making the generous donation of the funds by the McAlpine Foundation to procure a state-of-the-art CT scanner an opportunity to advance to the next level of diagnostic imaging, especially since OVAH is the only veterinary facility in Africa with such advanced equipment for both patient care and specialist training.

The Faculty has been training veterinarians from 1920, with the graduating class of the end of 2024 set to be the 100th class graduating with the BVSc degree. When the Faculty was started, the country was grappling with many veterinary diseases and animal welfare was really non-existent. Over the years, the veterinarians who graduated from the Faculty have gone on to assist our agricultural and companion animal sectors to develop and become what we see today, being the production of food that is good sound and wholesome to our and pets becoming members of the Family.

To support training of veterinarians and the subsequent need for veterinary specialist services like surgery, internal medicine, anesthesiology and radiology, as animal care needs in the country advanced, the University developed a tertiary care hospital on its Onderstepoort Campus that while totally funded by the University and Department of Higher Education, can still compete favourably with any medical hospital in the country.

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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