



Veterinary Association of Namibia

OFFICIAL
NEWSLETTER
OF THE VET-
ERINARY
ASSOCIA-
TION OF NA-
MIBIA

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THE MANGA

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Presidents Desk

First I want to thank the outgoing committee under the capable leadership of Dr Anselm Voigts for a successful 2016. The Foot and Mouth disease CPD, our annual Congress in October (with an emphasis on small companion animal medicine and surgery) and the improvement of availability of online CPD were some of the high lights. A special thank you also to Elvira Kleber, the editor of the Manga, for a job well done! Through her excellent work VAN management can communicate effectively with its members and interesting happenings in the Veterinary field are brought to the attention of all our members.

Welcome to our new committee members: Chairperson: Dr Beate Voigts, Vice chair: Dr Alec Bishi, EXCO members: Dr Adriaan Adank, Dr Stefan Beukes, Dr Mariette Beukes, Dr Morgan de Wit, Dr Vimanuka Mutjavikua, Dr Elvira Kleber (editor of the Manga), Dr Lizelle van der Waal, Dr Fannie Bruwer and Dr Alma Raath (secretary).

Namibia was honoured to be the host of the African Small Companion Animal Network (AFSCAN) board meeting, followed by the AFSCAN board and ambassador strategic planning meeting. Both meetings were held in Swakopmund just prior to our annual scientific congress on the 25th and 26th October. AFSCAN is an initiative of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA) Foundation.

We do have an anniversary to celebrate: In 1947 (70 years ago), a South-West African branch of the South African Veterinary Medical Association (SAVA) was established. (Read more in Dr Herbert Schneider's contribution to the Journal of the South African Veterinary Association- **Vol 83, No 1 (2012)** „History of Veterinary Medicine in Namibia” – has been published on 16th May 2012. You can access the article through the website: <http://www.jsava.co.za/index.php/jsava>

In 1947, a South-West African branch of the South African Veterinary Medical Association (SAVA) was established. Regular annual meetings were held and, by the end of the 1960s, these meetings took the form of a scientific congress, with the main aim of providing a forum for continuing education. One of the efforts of the Association to promote veterinary medicine amongst the farming community was the creation of an annual award – the Veterinary Performance Award – during the mid-1970s. Since then, this award has been presented annually to a farmer whose application of veterinary medicine, in close co-operation with his veterinarian, resulted in the improvement of animal health and production on his farm. In 1984, the South-West African branch of the SAVA was dissolved and became the Veterinary Association of Namibia (VAN)

(Figure 7). Although a voluntary association, all veterinarians in Namibia are members and the association is recognised as the representative body of the veterinary profession. Hence, the VAN nominates one of its members to represent the association on the Veterinary Council. In 1987, the VAN became a full member of the World Veterinary Association and, in 1990, a full member of the Commonwealth Veterinary Association. Since 2009, VAN is a full member of the World Small Animal Veterinary Association. In 2002, the President of VAN, Dr Schneider, was elected President of the World Veterinary Association for a 3-year period.)

We want to organise a Mini-Congress to celebrate this anniversary. Any other suggestions are very welcome!
Kind regards

Dr Beate Voigts

Stress

Stress is what happens to our body when a “pleasant” or “unpleasant” demand is placed upon it. Using this definition, we are all stressed a few times each day! If depression creeps in and deepens, we find it increasingly more difficult to escape from the combined condition often resulting in poor performance at work, breakdown of personal relationships leading to alcohol abuse, drug abuse, attempted /successful suicide or family murders.

The first paragraph is true of any person in any country in the world no matter how safe and secure the environment. South Africa’s high level of crime and violence just magnifies the whole issue!

MYTHS REGARDING STRESS

Myth 1:

Only unpleasant situations are stressful.

Winning a jackpot can be as stressful as losing your job; and falling in love can be as stressful as breaking up.

Myth 2:

What’s stressful to me is stressful to you.

Situations are rarely stressful in and of themselves. What causes one person to “flip out” might not even ruffle another. Stress is not something “out there”, it’s something we create. It’s dependent upon how we interpret situations and how we relate to the world around us. The good news is – if our mind creates our stress, then our mind can decrease our stress!

Myth 3:

In the ideal world, there wouldn’t be any stress.

Too little stress (leading to boredom) can make us as miserable as too much stress. Everyone has an optimal level of stress (i.e. life change). One of the secrets of happiness is determining how much stress is enough and how much is too much – then doing something about it.

THE VETERINARY PROFESSION

A survey of the veterinary and medical professions carried out in the United Kingdom (UK) during the 1970’s revealed that the veterinary profession had the highest divorce rate of all professions surveyed. Dentistry had the highest suicide rate.

In 1993, a report published in *Population Trends* listed occupations in order of Proportional Mortality Ratios (PMR) for suicide. Top of the list were veterinarians. The analysis covered men only, and was based on UK death registrations from 1979 to 1990. Vets had three times the expected number of deaths from suicide, dramatically outstripping their nearest competitors – pharmacists, dentists, farmers and medical practitioners – all of whom had around twice the general population’s expected deaths. The profession with the lowest PMR was physiotherapy.

HOW CAN PROFESSIONAL SUICIDE BE PREVENTED?

Mentor Schemes

These schemes are aimed at helping young vets with the stress of transition from university to practice. Non-university mentor schemes have been tried in many Australian states but the logistics of keeping in touch with new graduates proved impossible. The university-based schemes where the new graduates already know their mentors were more successful. Towards the end of the final year, all students are asked to list in order of preference three faculty members they would like as mentors.

Debriefing

Psychologists believe that crisis points should be better recognised by the profession and vets be encouraged to “de-brief” after such events. Stress is cumulative and if not released, will result in “breakdown”.

De-briefing or release points could include the following: the university’s mentor scheme, friends or family, a sympathetic employer or a professional counsellor.

Transition to practice

Australia recently developed guidelines for New Graduate Friendly Practices. Participating practices commit to providing support, supervision and backup to new graduates. In Australia, employers are legally responsible for the physical and psychological well being of their employees.

Stress proofing - “Vaccinating students for practice”

Veterinary graduates face a lifetime of stress peculiar to the profession. More can be done at the undergraduate level to give people the skills to cope. Be pro-active and stress-proof people. The University of Sydney Veterinary School has planned a new curriculum with a course in the first three years called Professional Practice, covering personal as well as professional skills. Years four and five will include lectures from psychologists. In the USA, some veterinary schools have full time psychologists included in the staff compliment. The University of Melbourne in Australia has a practitioner-in-residence who spends 10 weeks with the graduating class, during which time business advisers, career counsellors and psychologists are asked to give life-skills presentations.

Students must be taught how to recognise signs of depression in themselves and arrest it before they hit the downward spiral.

SIGNS OF STRESS IN YOUR COLLEAGUES:

Increased irritability

Indecision

Overeating or anorexia

Loss of sleep

Increased drinking and or smoking

Tension and anxiety

Physical symptoms such as headaches, indigestion

Loss of sense of humour or well-being

Relationship problems

SIGNS OF MAJOR DEPRESSION:

22 PROVEN STRESS REDUCING TIPS:

Don't pin negative labels on yourself. Forgetting an appointment only means that you forgot an appointment; it doesn't mean you are "scatterbrained".

Be careful of falling into an "I want it now" mentality. Computers, fax machines and microwave ovens work fast; people work slower.

Remember that the best thing about the future is that it comes only one day at a time.

Talk about your problems with a trusted friend or, if necessary, a health professional.

Less is more. Being happy with one dog does *not* mean you'll be twice as happy if you get another dog.

See "failures" as stepping stones rather than roadblocks.

Do the things you enjoy but stay out of debt.

Are you human? Well then, it's OK to make a mistake.

Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you *feel* better.

Remember that the next best thing to solving a problem is finding some humour in it.

Organise your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong; you won't have the stress of trying to find misplaced things.

Write your thoughts and feelings down in a journal (or on paper to be thrown away). This will help you clarify things and give you a new perspective.

Simplify your life. Buy less. Watch TV less. You will have more free time to get the really *important* things done.

Do household chores with your kids; make up a game and have fun.

Create a "buffer zone" between work and home (e.g., exercise, relaxing shower, change of clothes)

Always be aware of your surroundings. Walk with "purpose" – your body language should say "Don't mess with me".

Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Just as a vaccine containing a virus can protect you from illness, if you expose yourself to one or more of the dreaded aspects of an experience beforehand you'll probably feel less fearful (e.g., pre-exam tutorial, self defence classes).

Unplug your phone or switch on your answering machine, while you take a bath, have dinner, etc.

Remember that the secret to a great relationship is to treat all disasters as incidents and none of the incidents as disasters.

Ask for help. Other people may not know you're feeling overwhelmed unless you tell them. Sit down together and decide how others might chip in.

Be yourself; celebrate yourself. There's no one else like you anywhere. You have a special purpose for being here. Find out what it is.

Whatever you do, never lose hope.

Ken Petty

VAN Congress 2016

The annual Congress of the Veterinary Association of Namibia took place 27th to 29th October 2016 at the Swakopmund Hotel and Entertainment Centre. The main focus of this Congress were small animals. Topics included wound management, endocrine diseases, orthopedics, GIT surgery and urinary problems. The Congress was not as well attended as in previous years as not as many state vets attended. This could have been due to the fact that the topics included mainly small animal topics, or because the Government did not cover the costs as VAN is not registered under Section 21 of the Companies Act.

In total 60 vets attended the Congress (only 4 of them are not VAN members), 2 nurses, 10 delegates from AFSCAN (African Small Companion Animal Network) and 33 delegates from industry (13 companies).

All in all the Congress was a huge success and enjoyed by everyone.



VAN News

Van would like to welcome its new members:

Dr. Philip Coenrad Groenewald of Swakop Vet clinic

Dr. Erna Meyer, Swakopmund



VAN would like to congratulate Sandra and Werner Rogl on their son Leon. Born 16 November 2016, weighing 2650g and 48cm.

Happy birthday Herbert Schneider!

Herbert turned 75 on the 14th of January 2017.



Born in 1942, Herbert Schneider grew up on a farm in the Karibib district of Namibia, where he is part-time farming with cattle. He studied veterinary medicine at the University of Pretoria, South Africa (Onderstepoort), obtaining the degree **BVSc** degree in 1965. Post graduate qualifications are: **DVSM** (Dip. State Vet. Med) University of Edinburgh (Scotland) 1973; **Dr.med.vet**, University of Giessen (Germany) 1977; and Specialist veterinarian in Tropical Veterinary Medicine, State of Hessen (Germany) 1981 (**FTA-TVMM**).

He joined the Division of Veterinary Services (South West Africa Administration) in 1965 and served as State Veterinarian, based in Omaruru, Kamanjab, Ondangua and Windhoek/Rehoboth. In 1978 he was appointed to the position of Director of Veterinary Services – the first Namibian veterinarian ever to be appointed in this position - and in 1984 Principal Secretary for Agriculture, Nature Conservation, Veterinary Services and Sea Fisheries of SWA/Namibia. He re-joined the Directorate of Veterinary Services from 1993 to 1998 as State Veterinarian based at the Windhoek export abattoir.

In 1998 he established a veterinary consultancy in Windhoek and is the Principal Consultant of AGRIVET International Consultants, which is a consultancy in the field of veterinary medicine, with special expertise in the field of the evaluation of the quality of veterinary services, veterinary legislation, food hygiene & safety and veterinary public health.

In September 2002 he was elected President of the **World Veterinary Association (WVA)** for three years and during July 2005 he was elected Immediate Past President and Member of the Executive Committee of the WVA until 2008.

Recent activities include being chairman of the **OIE** (World Organization for Animal Health, Paris, France - which is the international standard setting body for animal health and animal welfare (as is the World Health Organization (WHO) the international standard setting for human health) Ad Hoc Group on the Quality of Veterinary Services (since 2003) and Chairman of the OIE ad hoc Expert Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (since 2010). From 2008 to 2016 he was a member of the OIE ad Hoc Group on CBPP (and the ad hoc Working Group on the OIEPVS Aquatic Tool (since 2012).

Dr Schneider is actively involved in the Evaluation of the Quality of Veterinary Services around the world for the OIE as a Senior PVS (Performance of Veterinary Services) and PVSGAP evaluator, having been the Team Leader to a number of OIE member countries around the world, such as Australia, Brazil, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Philippines, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam etc..

He is the author of numerous scientific publications and has given papers at various international veterinary congresses. He is the author of the handbook "Animal Health and Veterinary Medicine in Namibia" (1994).

Dr Schneider drafted the first governing legislation for Namibia's veterinary profession in 1984 and served the veterinary profession for many years as President of the **Veterinary Association of Namibia** and President of the **Veterinary Council of Namibia**

Dr Schneider has been Council Member of the **Namibia Medicines Control Council** for 11 years (4 years as Vice-Chair) and 11 years as Chair of the Veterinary Medicines Sub-Committee. At present he is Member of the Council of the **Namibia Biosafety Council and member of the Namibia Qualifications Authority (NQA)**.

When bestowing the Honorary Membership of the **South African Veterinary Association** on Dr Schneider in 2005, the following was said(quote): *"In the course of national and international veterinary history there are individuals who stand out above their peers. Dr Schneider is such a colleague and for numerous reasons, that are evident from his curriculum vitae, the Executive Committee decided to bestow this honour on him."*

Likewise the **Veterinary Association of Namibia** awarded Dr Schneider with its prestigious Certificate of Merit *..in Recognition of exemplary service to the Veterinary Profession as well as Extraordinary Contributions to Veterinary Medicine in Namibia* (end of quote).

Dr. Ada Schmidt-Dumont



With great sadness VAN was informed about the passing of Dr. Ada Schmidt-Dumont on the 27th January 2017. VAN would like to convey their condolences to family and friends of our beloved life time member.

