Celebrating World Veterinary Year 2011 in South Africa

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of veterinary education, 2011 has been declared World Veterinary Year. It was launched in France, home of the first formal education in veterinary science, on the 24th January 2011. A number of activities have been planned worldwide and we are proud to announce that South Africa is also part of this global celebration.

The main aim of the celebration is “to improve public awareness and remind policy makers everywhere in the world that

- The veterinary profession has been serving humankind for more than 250 years and,
- Modern veterinarians are not only animal doctors and animal-welfare advocates, but also key public-health stakeholders because of their crucial role in preventing the spread of transboundary disease, reducing global hunger, controlling zoonoses, monitoring food quality and safety, overseeing/performing biomedical research and protecting the environment and biodiversity”

For many years, our country has experienced several challenges relating to

- The plethora of animal diseases and problems unique to our sub-continent
- Lack of appreciation of the value of the veterinary profession
- The shortage of veterinary professionals in the country, especially amongst the previously disadvantaged groups
- Insufficient funding of veterinary services and poor access to veterinary services by rural communities
- Food insecurity, with a significant number of the population not having access to protein

As part of the global celebration and in an attempt to create awareness, the South African veterinary fraternity has organised various activities for the year throughout the country. These activities include

- Various mini-congresses for the South African veterinary professions
- “I want to be a veterinarian” programme for school children to be held on the 15th April 2011 at Ondersteopoort Veterinary Faculty
- Various animal-health awareness and disease campaigns to be held in various provinces

The international organisers of World Veterinary Year 2011 have chosen South Africa as the venue for the closing event of the global celebration. This will take place at the 30th World Veterinary Congress, to be held in Cape Town in October 2011. We are proud and excited that South Africa has been chosen to host this prestigious international congress whereby various international experts will share their knowledge with the veterinary fraternity in an attempt to improve global food security, animal health and welfare and the wellbeing of human beings.

We therefore call upon all members of the veterinary professions, industry, animal-welfare organisations and the public to engage the respective veterinary authorities in the nine provinces on the planned activities in the respective provinces and let us all ensure that we are part of this global celebration.

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