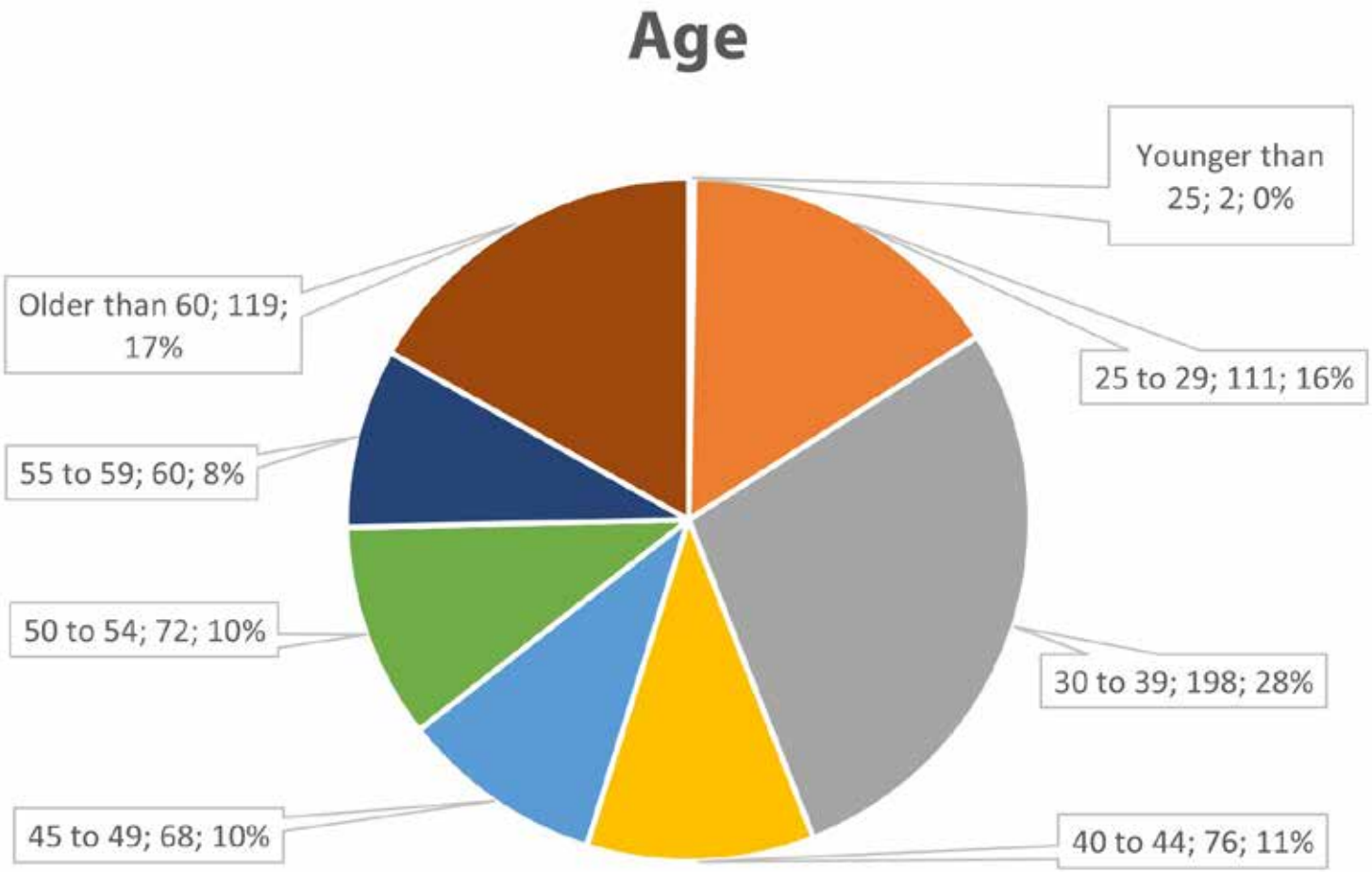
VET nuus·news

Desember / December 2022

The Monthly Magazine of the SOUTH AFRICAN VETERINARY ASSOCIATION
Die Maandblad van die SUID-AFRIKAANSE VETERINÊRE VERENIGING



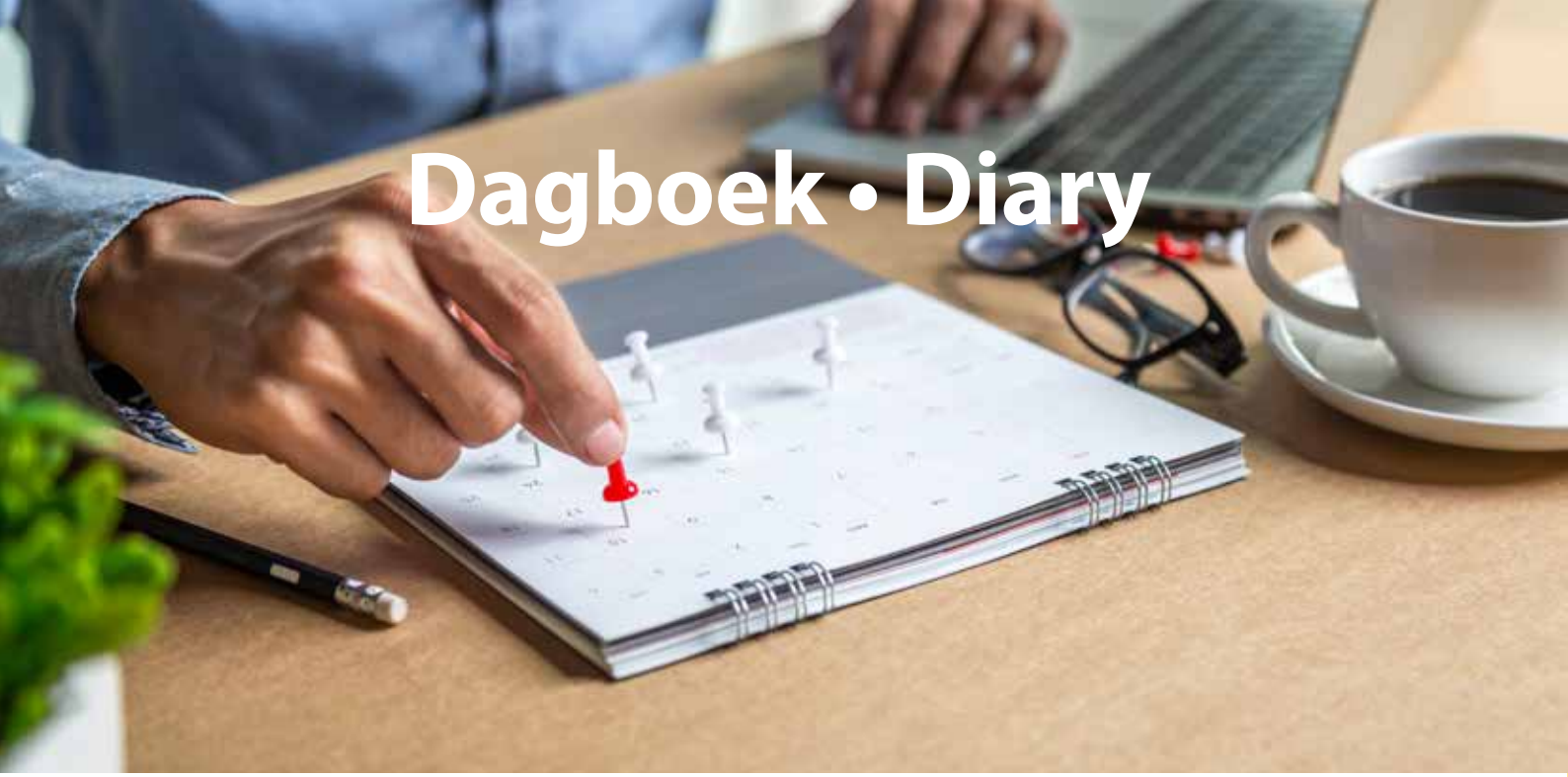
FOCUS

SAVA Survey: Emigration and Scarce Skills

CPD

Common respiratory diseases in commercial South African piggeries

SAVA
South African Veterinary Association
Suid-Afrikaanse Veterinêre Vereniging



Dagboek • Diary

Ongoing / Online 2022 / 2023

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Certification in Clinical Integrative Canine Rehabilitation (Through College of Integrative Veterinary Therapies)
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December 2022

World Aquatic Health Conference
03 - 07 December
Venue: Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria
Info: https://Wavma2022.co.za or
conferences@vetlink.co.za

February 2023

SAEVA Congress
16-19 February
Venue: AHA Gateway Hotel, Umhlanga Ridge
Contact: conferences@vetlink.co.za

March 2023

10th International Sheep Veterinary Congress (ISVC)
06-10 March
Venue: Seville, Spain
Info: https://isvc2023.com/index.php

Wildlife Group Congress
9-11 March 2023
Venue: 26D South, Muldersdrift (Hybrid)
Contact: conferences@vetlink.co.za

May 2023

RuVASA Congress
8 - 10 May 2023
Venue: Muldersdrift (Misty Hills)
Contact: conferences@vetlink.co.za

June 2023

IVRA EVDI Joint Conference
18-23 June
Venue: University College Dublin, Dublin, Ireland
Info: http://www.ivraevdi2023.com/









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Dear members,

> You give but little when you give of your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give - Kahlil Gibran

As we enter the festive season, reflecting on what it entails is important. Some gifts are precious because they were given to us by someone in authority or high esteem. Though of little monetary value, other gifts are cherished because they come from a dear family member or a trusted friend. Some gifts are precious because they represent a great sacrifice made by the giver or because they fill a real need, even an urgent one. But the most precious gifts are those given not out of obligation but out of genuine love. A truly unselfish giver does not expect to be repaid for his kindness.

The most precious gift was when God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him. God is our Father that gave us life, and He loyally cares for us as a devoted father cares for his children.

Giving should be a priority for all of us. *"Learn to light a candle in the darkest moments of someone's life. Be the light that helps others see; it is what gives life its deepest significance" - Roy T. Bennett.*

So many of our colleagues are in a dark place. I am confronted virtually daily with colleagues either contemplating suicide or knowing someone contemplating suicide. Are we giving support to these colleagues a priority of ours?

Giving is to be done proportionally. There is no expectation that any colleague must give their all for colleagues. How much do we give, and how much do we receive? SAVA is confronted regularly by questions of what SAVA is doing for me. Have you ever considered giving some of your money, time, knowledge and expertise proportional to what you expect in return? *"It's not how much we give but how much love we put into giving" - Mother Theresa.*

Giving is to be done sacrificially. Giving isn't always going to feel good. There will sometimes be a struggle and some pain associated with giving. *"What does one person give to another? He gives of himself, the most precious he has, and his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other—but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humour, of his sadness—of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him." - Erich Fromm*

Giving is to be done cheerfully. *"Happiness doesn't result from what we get, but from what we give." - Ben Carson.*

I want to challenge all members of SAVA to reappraise what they are prepared to give to SAVA to ensure that we fulfil the expectations of our Credo. Are you willing to give, and if so, will you make it a priority in your daily life? Will it be proportional to what your expectations of SAVA are? Are you prepared to sacrifice some of your money, time, knowledge and expertise and most importantly, will you do it cheerfully?

May you have a blessed Christmas remembering what God and His Holy Son Jesus gave to you.

Season greetings.,

Paul van der Merwe



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Editor's notes / Redakteurs notas



Andriette van der Merwe

Dear all,

South Africa has all the tools to compete in the new global village - an eager workforce, ready to take on any challenge. Tom Peters

The Peters Principles: Enthusiasm. Emotion. Excellence. Energy. Excitement. Service. Growth. Creativity. Imagination. Vitality. Joy. Surprise. Independence. Spirit. Community. Limitless human potential. Diversity. Profit. Innovation. Design. Quality. Entrepreneurialism. Wow.

(Tom Peters)

If I look at the life and philosophy of Tom Peters, I consider him a wise man. And a wise man once said the above, amongst several other very inspiring and interesting things.

How do we perceive things happening in our near vicinity, profession, country and world? What forms our minds and idea about change? Many things influence the way we react to our experiences. Humans (like most creations) are reactional beings. Yes, there is great value in planning and proactive measures, but in the end, it boils down to how we react. People in a place of hurt will react differently to a situation of a situational change than people in a place of comfort and confidence. Some people may react to sudden changes by flight and others by fight. Yet another may freeze, either to be overwhelmed or to assess and react more positively.

When taking a step back at looking at changes (possible onslaught – depending on the point of view) within the veterinary community, it is not difficult to predict reactions to it. The closer the change/onslaught is to your heart or home, the stronger you will react. It is a natural defence mechanism. The first and most primal instinct is the protection of the individual; the second will be for the protection of the species.

But where does all this philosophical hot air fit into the topic of the month, i.e. the SAVA survey on Scarce skills and emigration? Look at the reaction from the profession to these very hot topics. The above points are highlighted and underlined by the outcome of each question. For example, being removed from the scarce skill list may not directly influence the practice owner who never struggles to fill the posts he may have or the lone ranger who is comfortable with his work and income. He may not see why being off the list is such a big deal. Yet the person who can see that the loss of being off the list will be detrimental and isolate South Africa from the international community will react differently. The same can be seen in the views of the personnel at the Faculty vs the other veterinarians on questions pertaining to the location of another faculty.

The emigration of veterinarians is very close to my heart. My own daughter currently works in London. She completed her CCS in rural Bushbuckridge, worked a while in a rural practice and was approached to join a practice in the UK. As parents, we always told both our daughters that we would never stand in their way if they wanted to leave the country. We encouraged both our daughters to go out and grab opportunities. We are realistic about the state the country is in and not blind to the challenges, needs and aspirations of the young professionals. As a mother, it is hard to have your daughter being far away. As somebody in the veterinary community, I feel sad that many excellent veterinarians leave to find greener pastures elsewhere. I am torn between being loyal to the country and believing that a lot has been invested in these people and their desire to feel secure.

When I spoke to the practice she works at now; it was resounding that they are confident in the work ethic of the South African Veterinarians. And it resounds throughout the world. South African Veterinarians are actively sought for their excellent skills, hard-working nature, friendliness and ability to adapt and get on with the job.

I am not sure that magazine advertisements prompt emigration, and the survey also points to that. However, I see the difference the South African Veterinarians make in the global village, which eagerly slurps them up. Could that be our contribution to the overall care and health of animals worldwide? Again at what cost? We see people returning to their roots. Hopefully, we are only lending these professionals to the world, and they will return and be welcomed back to fulfil their position at home again.

I hope you have a blessed Christmas season and experience the reason for the season.

Regards,

Andriette

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Dr Martin Jansen
Greencross Vets Kawana Waters, Queensland.



Dr Martin Jansen and his dog Lily (who also moved from SA)

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Survey Results:
Emigration and Scarce Skills

South African Veterinary Association
Suid-Afrikaanse Veterinêre Vereniging

Background to Survey and Survey Results

The recent removal of veterinarians from the Scarce Skills list was a Worrying and Unfortunate development. Worrying: We know (albeit intuitively) that the services veterinarians provide are key to food safety and security and that the veterinary community is not growing at the pace required for our developmental economy. Unfortunate: even though we (as SAVA) represent more than 50% of the veterinarians in South Africa, we have not been consulted in any way or form about our perspective on the scarcity of veterinarians.

To this end, we have been engaging on multiple fora with stakeholders. We thought it important to gather the perspective of the veterinary community – hence the request in the survey (sent to members) to forward the survey link to as many members as possible.

In designing surveys, one needs to bear in mind the following:

1. Keep it short, or your respondents will not finish the survey
2. Be clear in the questions you want to be answered – it is easy to ask many questions; refer to point 1. above.
3. Develop the survey in such a manner that certain questions can be cross-checked against each other
4. Provide appropriate feedback to respondents to encourage future participation in surveys.

The survey was designed with different pathways – depending on the answers provided; further questions may be elicited. In reading the feedback provided, remember that you may not have been asked certain questions based on your provided answers.

So, what are the primary questions that we wanted to have answered?

1. It is a perceived common cause that veterinarians are emigrating. We wanted to know whether this perception stands up to scrutiny. If so, who are they (age, sex, geographical location)
2. The real tests to confirm scarcity of skills are: do practices struggle to appoint veterinarians, and can persons looking for a position as a veterinarian easily find a position? In short, was the removal of veterinarians from the scarce skills list justified?
3. Since discussions around a second veterinary faculty have been going on for a while – what are the perceptions and concerns regarding this? Will it alleviate the issue of scarcity?

The response rate on surveys of our sample size (701 to 2500 potential respondents) ranges between 30 and 37%.

More information can be found in the 2022 article published in Elsevier here:

Response rates of online surveys in published research: A meta-analysis.

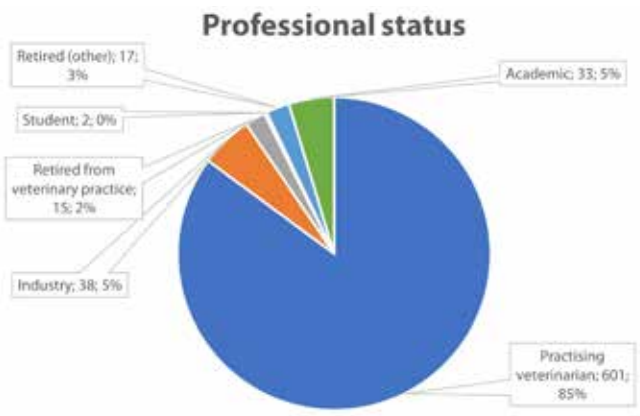
We are therefore satisfied that a response rate of 47% (706 responses, sent to 1499 email addresses) is statistically significant.

Feedback on Emigration and Scarce Skills Survey

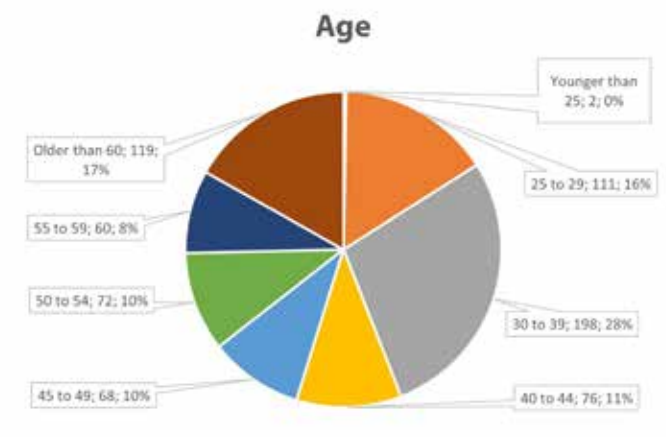
Setting the scene

It is appropriate to first set the scene in terms of the responses received in terms of demographics and geographical spread.

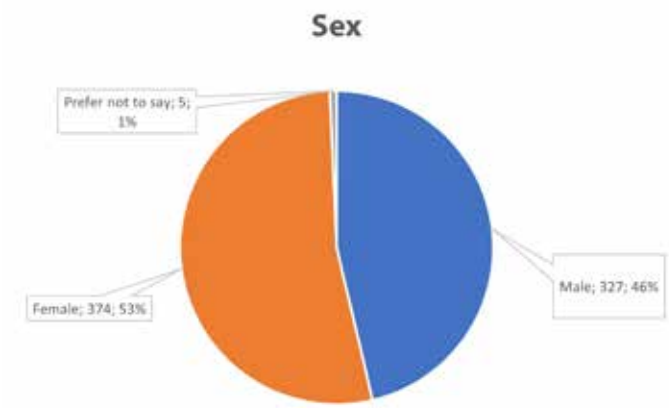
In reading the graphs: the first number next to the legend is the number of responses, and the second is the percentage of the total.



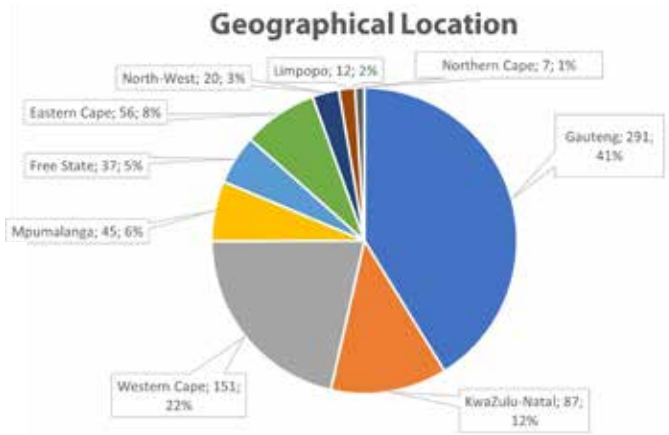
We are satisfied that the largest cohort responses are from practising veterinarians.



If one adds the age groups above age 44, the 387 responses equate to 54.8% of the total responses – again, this provides us with a fair split between individuals that have been in practice for less than 20 years or more than 20 years.

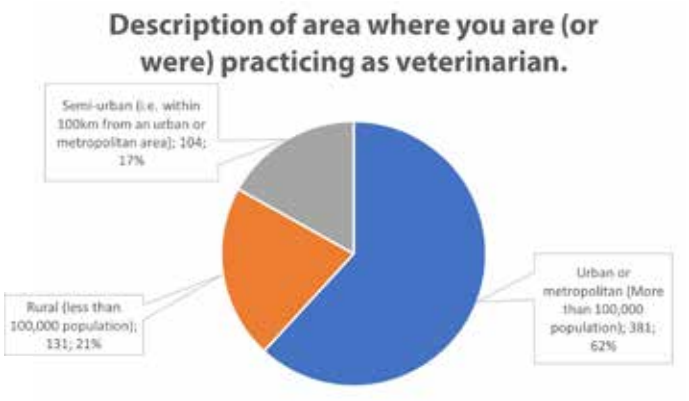


The response rate based on sex is similarly balanced.



As could be reliably predicted, the predominant responses came from the three most economically active provinces, Gauteng, Western Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal (comprising 75% of the responses).

If you were either a practising veterinarian *or* retired from veterinary practice, you were required to indicate where you are (were) practising. The total universe of this response was 616.



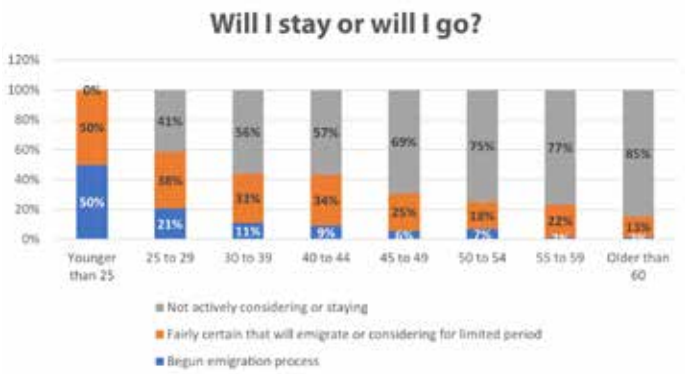
Predictably, the largest proportion of responses came from Urban/Metropolitan veterinarians. However, the responses received from the Rural and Semi-urban categories (approximately 21% and 17%, respectively) still provide a useful base to understand the particular scarcity of veterinarians in these two categories. The total of these responses was 616.

Emigration

Anecdotally, we are all concerned about the numbers of veterinarians we think are emigrating. We, therefore, deemed it appropriate to tackle this issue head-on – this relates to the critical skills issue, veterinary training, and the ability of practices to find suitable employees. All respondents to the survey were asked what their current status was with regard to emigration. Although there are a few ways to stratify the analysis of this data, we deem two categories important in terms of this feedback: Age and description of where you are (or were) practising as a veterinarian. Bear in mind that the last category answers back to 616 veterinarians.

Although the questionnaire had five possible responses, we combined the results to give more concise reporting:

Question	***Combined category***
I have begun the process of applying for work in another country	*Begun or fairly certain that will emigrate*
I am fairly certain that I want to emigrate in the near future	*Fairly certain that I will emigrate or consider for limited period*
I am considering working in another country for a limited period (no more than 5 years)	
I am not actively considering emigrating or working in another country for a limited period	*Not actively considering or staying*
I will continue working in South Africa	

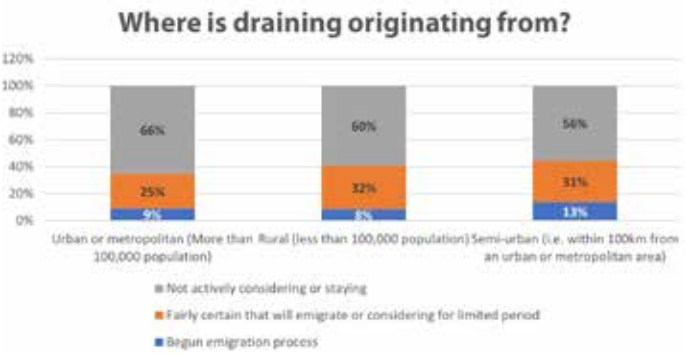


Firstly, by age. It is no surprise that the younger the respondent, the more likely it is that they are looking to emigrate.

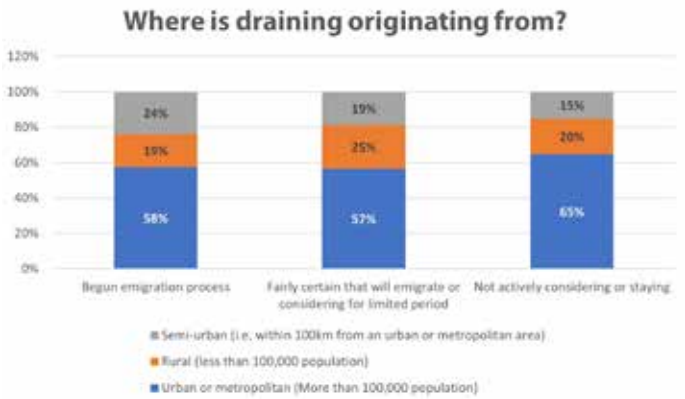
This graph indicates that 21% of the age group 25-29 has already begun the emigration process, with another 38% indicating that they are fairly certain that they will emigrate, even if only for a limited period. That leaves only 41% that indicated that they are willing to stay. Remember that this age group has recently finished their Compulsory Community Services year. Please note that there were only two respondents younger than 25, which cannot be seen as a representative sample of the age group.

Predictably, as the age of the respondents progresses, the likelihood of emigration decreases. It is disconcerting to note the large cohort of veterinarians in the age profile younger than 45 years that have actively begun the emigration process numbers to 14%, and those that indicated that are fairly certain to emigrate or considering doing so for fewer than five years is 23%. This certainly leaves a gap from an employment perspective (which we will touch on later) – finding young veterinarians to join a practice or to acquire practices becomes difficult.

As emigration is clearly taking place, it is possible to view the data from two angles. Firstly, are veterinarians being drained from Urban, Rural or Semi-Urban areas?



Based on the graph above, it is clear that semi-urban veterinarians are more likely to be emigrating – almost 50% more likely than rural veterinarians. 44% of semi-urban veterinarians have either begun the process or are highly likely to emigrate. To avoid confusion with the next graph, it is simplified as follows: if you look at a group of 100 semi-urban veterinarians, 13 have begun emigrating.



This graph presents a different angle – 58% of veterinarians that have begun the emigration process are from Urban or metropolitan areas. This needs to be viewed in the context of the larger cohort of veterinarians employed in urban/ metropolitan areas. To avoid confusion with the previous graph, this graph can be simplified as follows: If you look at a group of 100 veterinarians who have indicated that they are emigrating, 58 of whom will be from urban or metropolitan areas.

Why are veterinarians emigrating?

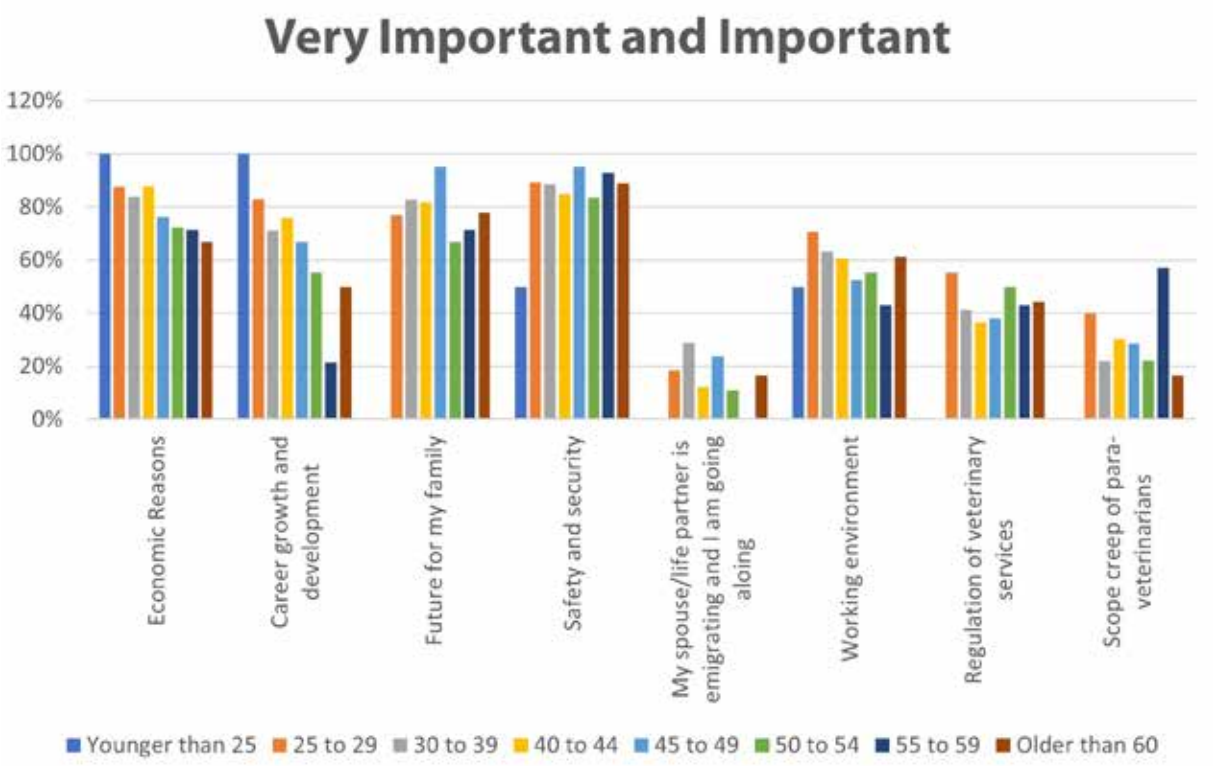
Respondents only answered the remainder of questions in the emigration section based on whether they answered in positive to any of the following questions (258 respondents – hereafter referred to as "emigrants"):

- I have begun the process of applying for work in another country
- I am fairly certain that I want to emigrate in the near future
- I am considering working in another country for a limited period (no more than 5 years)

Respondents were required to indicate the importance of the following factors in reaching their decision:

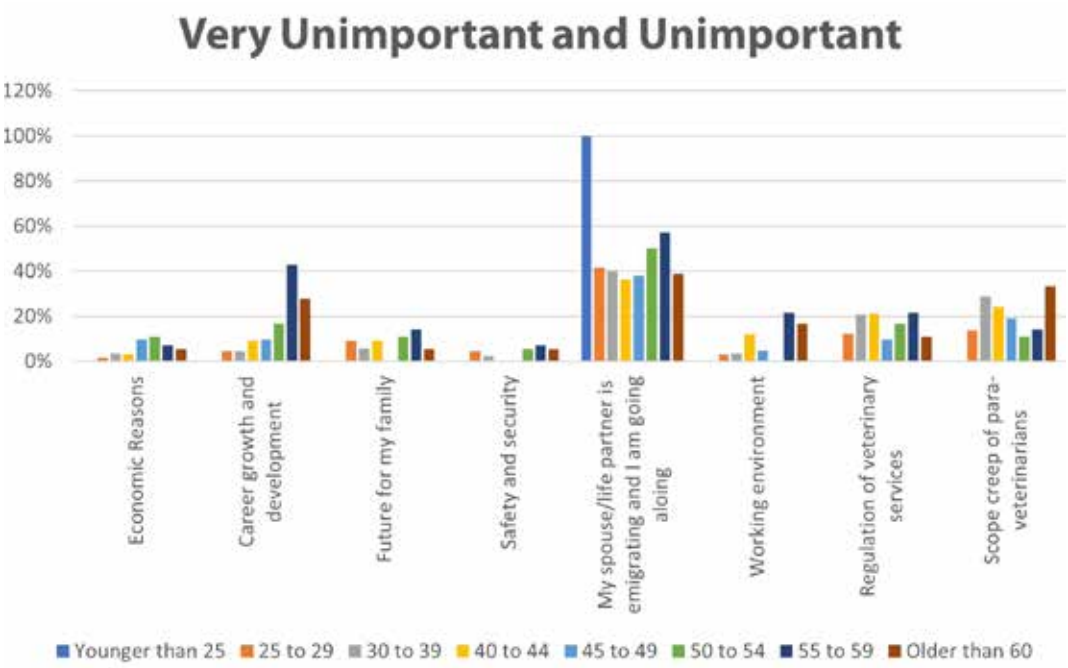
- Economic Reasons
- Career growth and development
- Future for my family
- Safety and Security
- My spouse/life partner is emigrating, and I am going along
- Working environment
- Regulation of veterinary services
- Scope creep of para-veterinarians

Again, this data may be presented in a number of different ways, but we believe that an age-based approach is best suited to this data set.



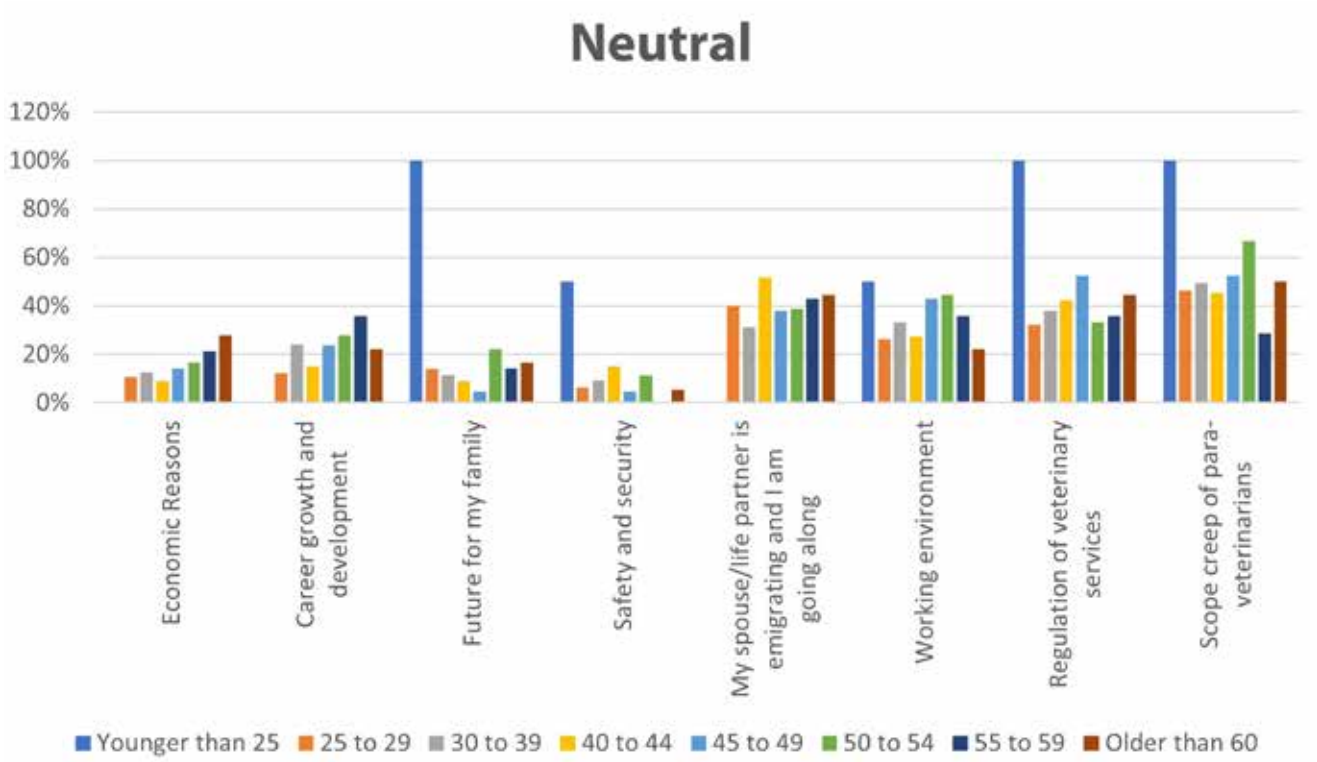
For this graph, we added together the responses garnered from Very Important and Important. Unsurprisingly, Safety and Security is top of mind for all individuals that are emigrants. The category Economic Reasons is deemed Highly Important by all age groups (the least being more than 60%) but predictably reduces as the age group ages. Career Growth follows a similar trend to Economic Reasons. Scope creep of para-veterinarians is significantly different for the 55-to-59-year age group – but statistically, the sample size is too small to make any meaningful inference (8 responses out of 14 indicated Very Important or Important).

In some instances, it is not only useful to see what respondents identified as being important, but also to take a view of areas that they deem to be profoundly UNimportant. The graph below indicates responses recorded as Unimportant and Very Unimportant.



Predictably Career Growth is not important for age groups beyond 55. An interesting phenomenon arose looking at the category My spouse/life partner is Emigrating category; it can be inferred that veterinarians are likely to be the driver of emigration decisions in a household (see also Very Important and Important Graph). This is evident from the little importance the emigration decision is in terms of the other person in the household – remember that we have not confirmed the incidence of both parties in the household being veterinarians.

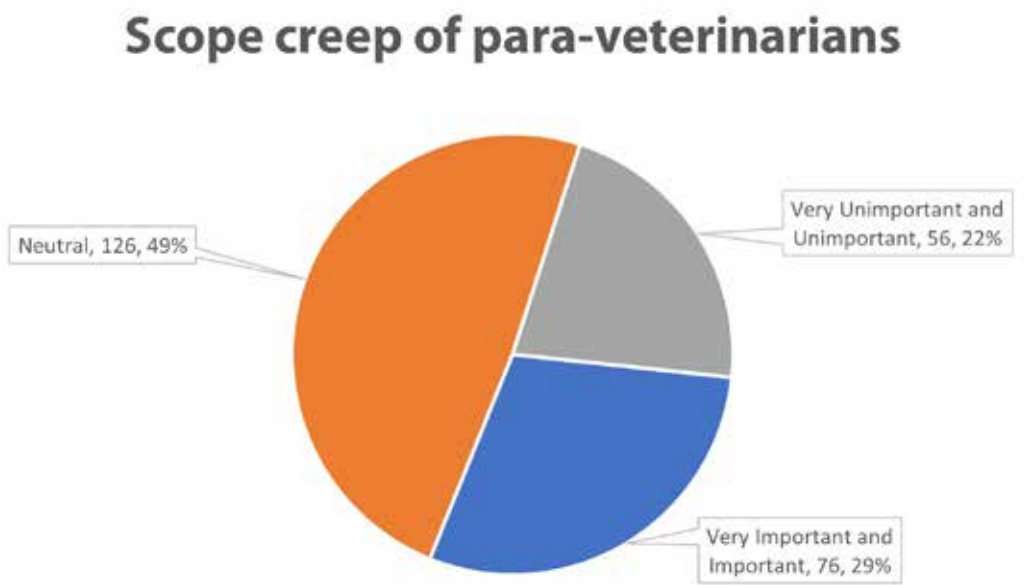
The last perspective we are reviewing is the Neutral category. It is important to review the level of ambivalence experienced by respondents to questions that we anticipated to elicit a strong response – either positive or negative.



As a result of the sample size (2) in the Young 25 age group, it is not statistically relevant to interpret results. Scope creep of para-veterinarians yielded a result indicating that 49% of respondents were neutral.

This can mean two possible things: respondents have little knowledge of current events in the para-veterinary space or respondents (despite having sufficient knowledge) are neutral about the impact of scope creep in their lives.

As a result of the above Neutral result for the Scope creep of para-veterinarians, it might be useful to compare the different categories:

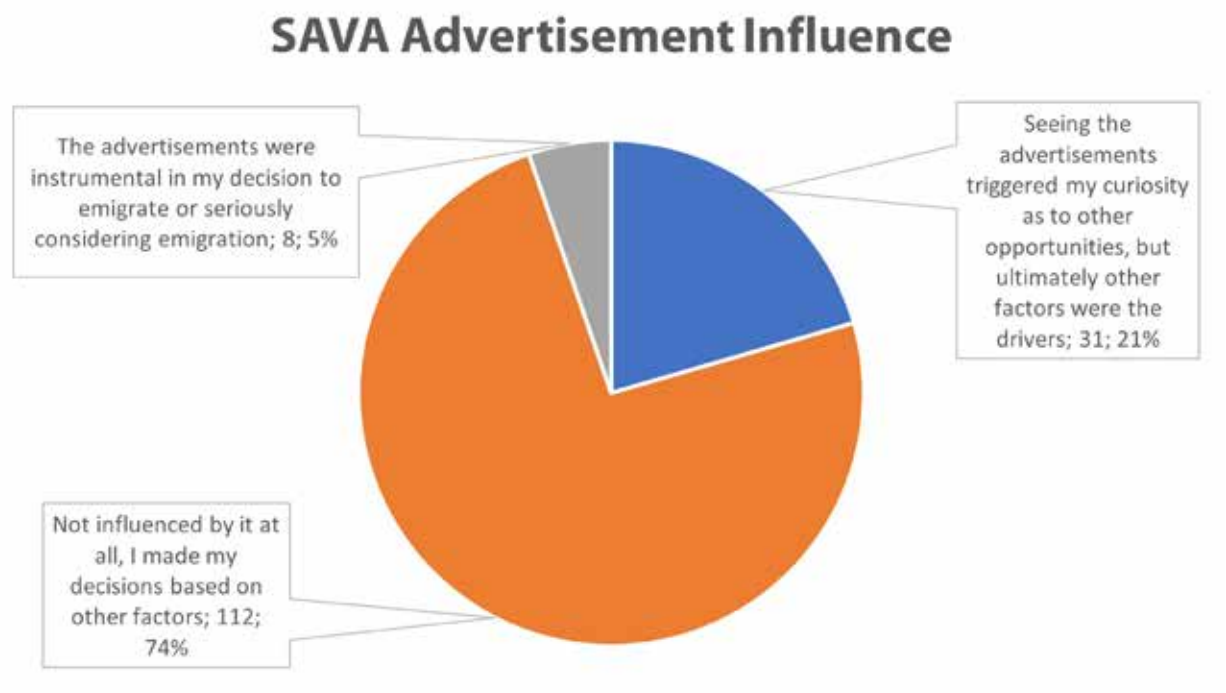


If anything, the graph above indicates that additional communication and information are required by veterinarians to understand the future potential impact of para-veterinarians on the veterinary profession.

The issue of SAVA placing advertisements for overseas positions is contentious and often polarising among our members. We have received several requests to abstain from sending advertisements of this nature. Significant discussions at Board level resulted in SAVA continuing to do so – this decision was reached based on the following reasons:

1. Information on posts overseas is readily available on the internet – all one needs to do is do a perfunctory search
2. It is SAVA's duty to share information with our members that may be of use to them in their professional lives
3. A significant portion of SAVA's revenue will be carved away if we decide to discontinue.

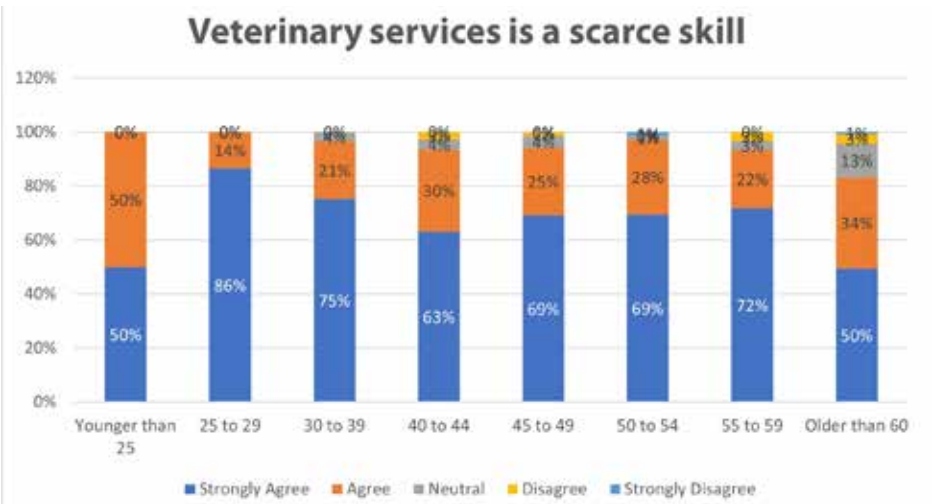
Nevertheless, we deemed it appropriate to request from emigrants how influential our advertisements were in deciding to emigrate. The graph below depicts respondents that have either begun emigration or are fairly certain that they will emigrate.



From the graph, it is clear that only 5% (8 respondents) indicated that the advertisements were instrumental in the decision to emigrate. It implies that 95% of respondents do not feel that SAVA had any meaningful role to play in the emigration decision.

Scarce Skills

The veterinary profession was dumbfounded when the Department of Home Affairs removed veterinarians from the critical skills list in February 2022. We have been in constant engagement with the relevant authorities and will report any progress made in this regard to you. To strengthen our argument, we have also included a section on scarce skills in the survey.

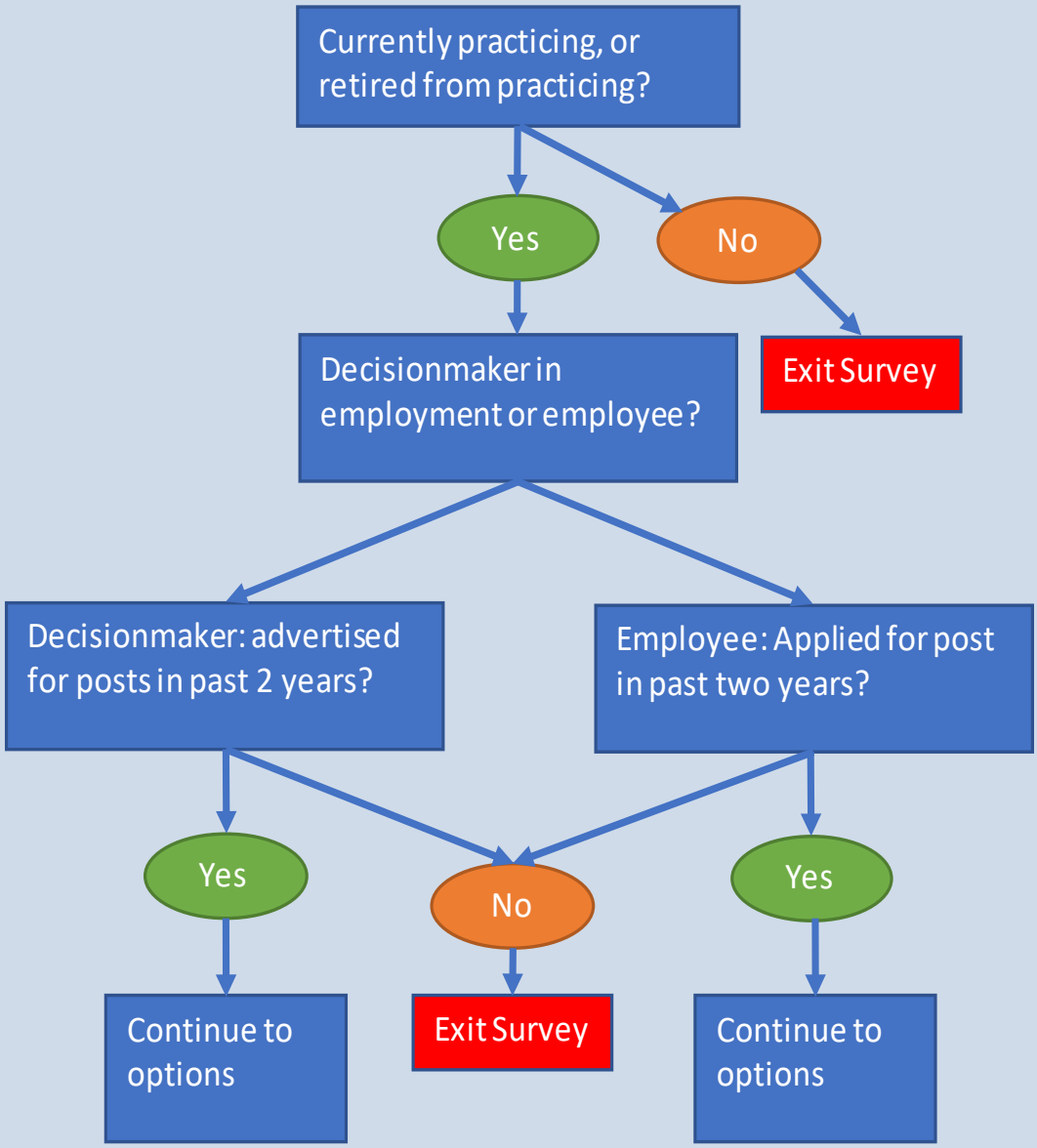


Firstly, we needed to ascertain what the perceptions of our members are in respect to whether vet services are a scarce skill.

Resoundingly (and unsurprisingly) the entire cohort of respondents indicated a rate of 94% (the total of Agree and Strongly Agree).

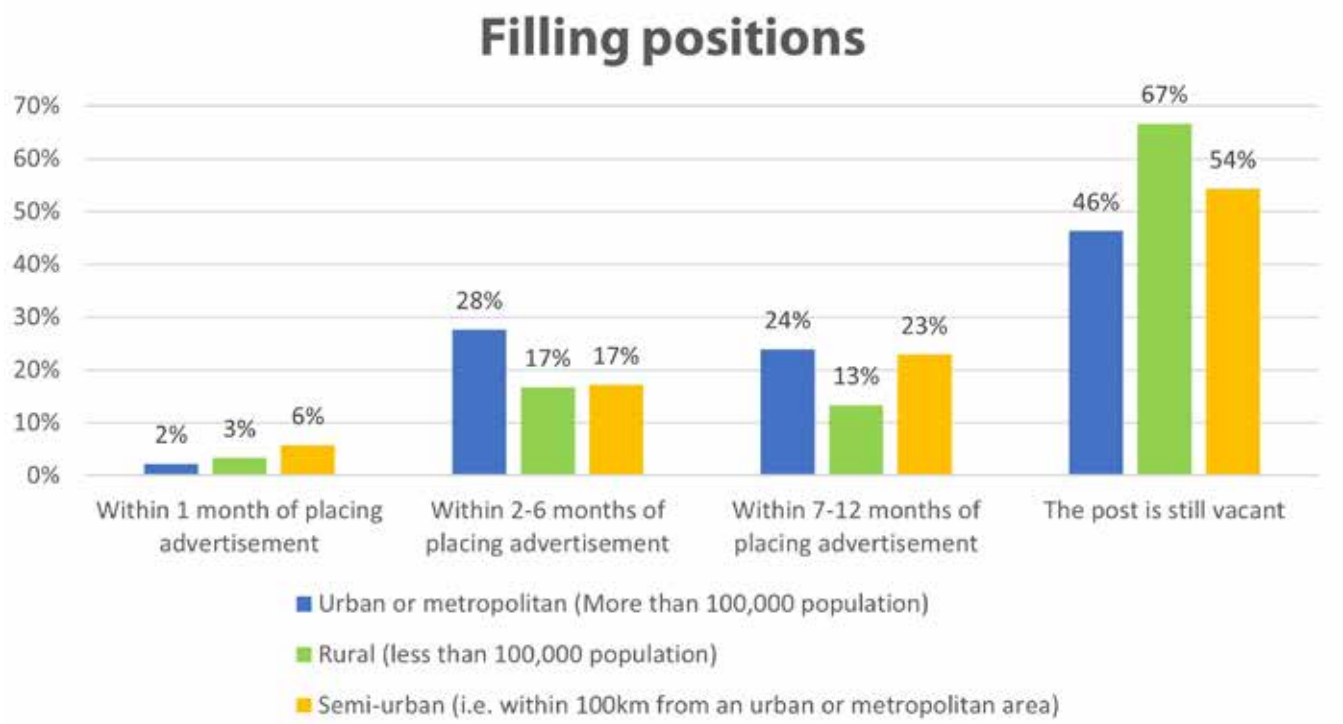
Because of the expected responses, we crafted additional questions for employers and employees.

The following flowchart depicts how questions were asked of different types of respondents:



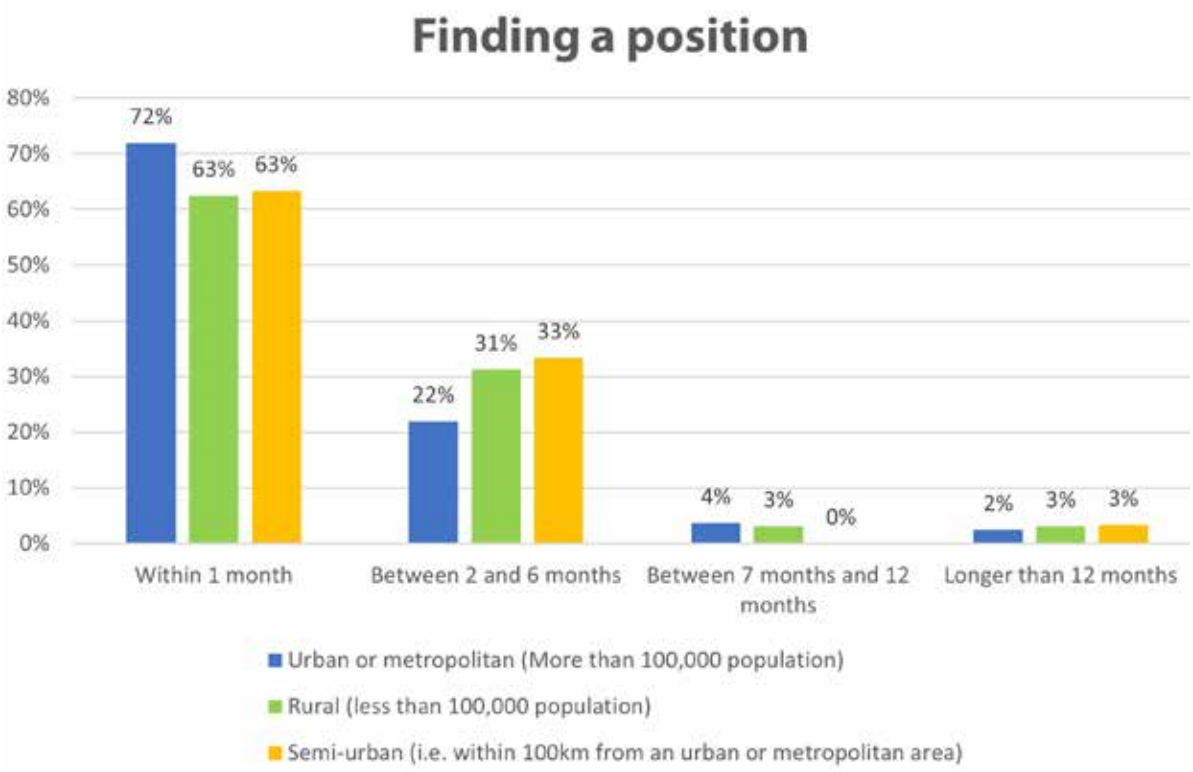
As can be gathered from the flowchart, we tried to obtain relevant information (i.e., over the past two years). Furthermore, in terms of analysis of the data, we deemed it relevant to try and understand whether Urban/metropolitan (for the purposes of this survey, a population of 100,000 or more), Rural (less than 100,000 population) or semi-urban (within 100km from an urban or metropolitan area) were most affected.



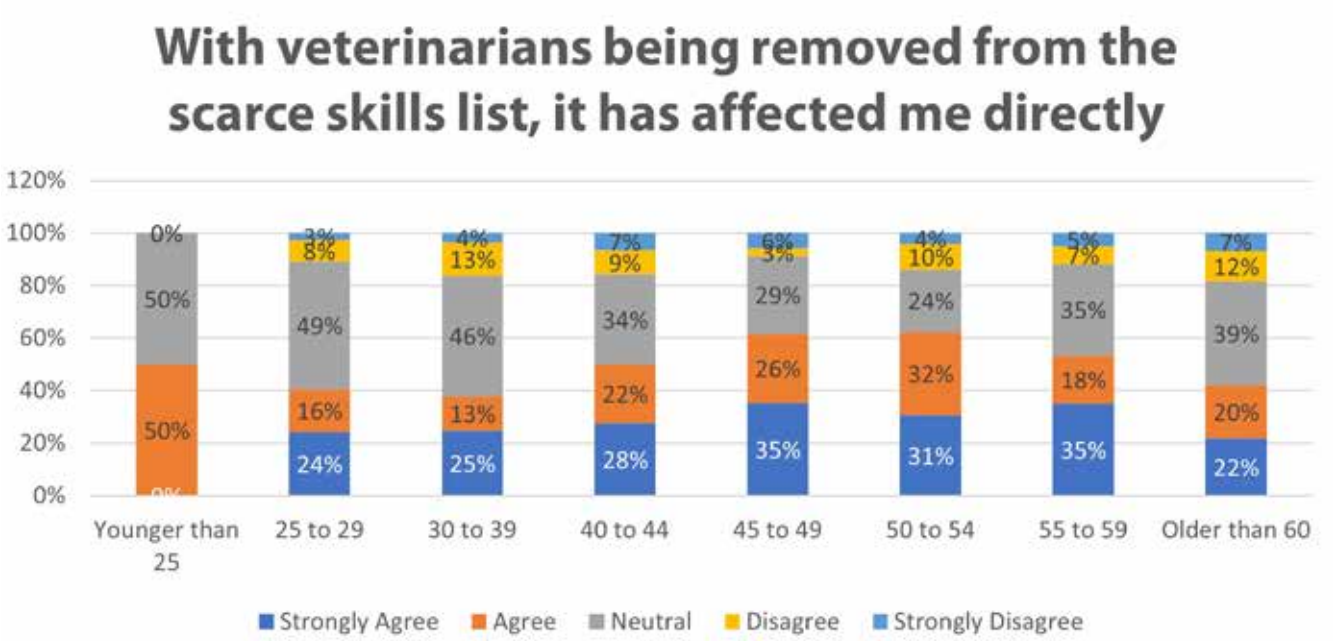


The graph above depicts the difficulty of practices trying to fill positions. An astounding 45% of urban/metropolitan positions are still vacant after 12 months of being placed – rural practices suffer the most with two-thirds of placed advertisements still vacant. Only 2% of advertised positions in urban practices were filled within one month of placement.

From the above, it is obviously difficult to fill positions – urban, rural, or semi-urban. To see whether scarcity is a real issue, we needed to see if it was easy for job seekers to find a position.



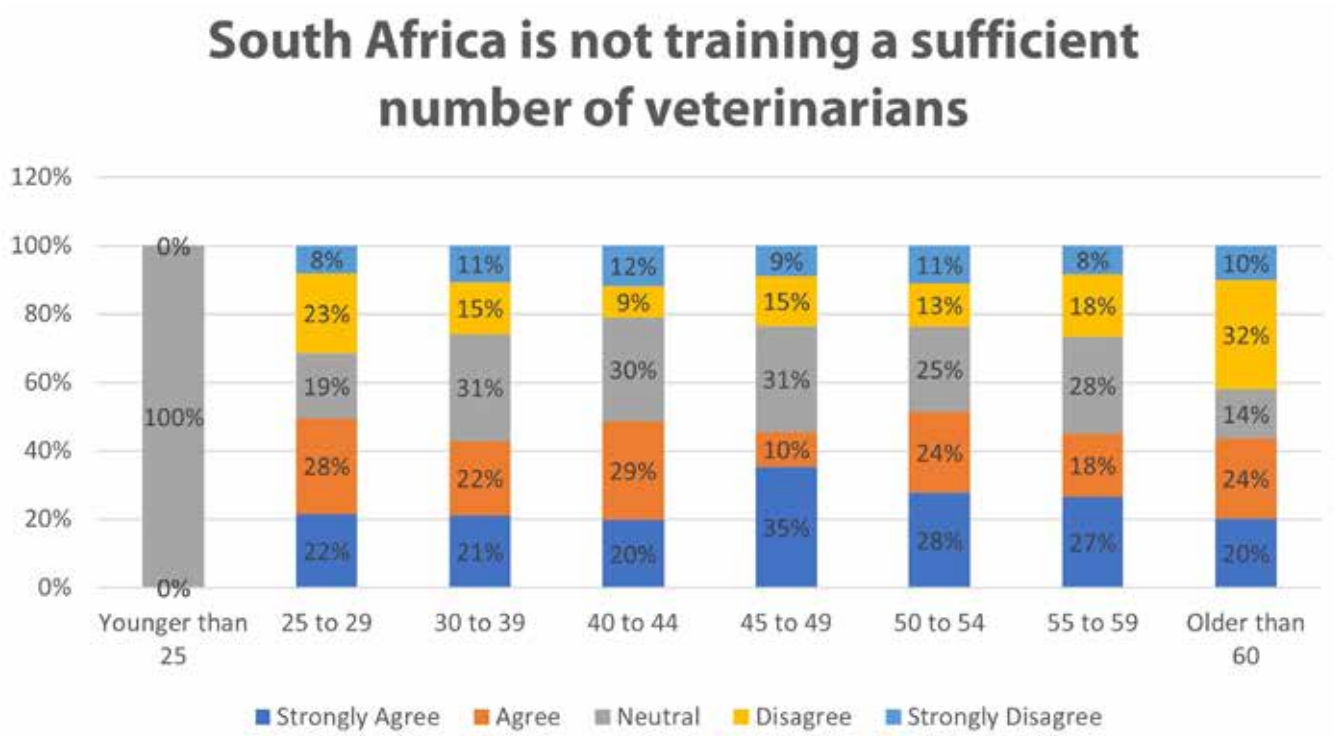
From this, it is glaringly obvious that looking for a position as a veterinarian is very easy. 72% of veterinarians were able to find employment within one month of starting to look. Even for rural and semi-urban positions, it appeared to be very easy. Of the 144 respondents to these questions, 136 were able to change employment within 6 months – 94.4%. Without making any significant logical leaps, it is clear to surmise from the previous two graphs that there is indeed a scarcity of veterinarians.



Perhaps less surprising is the direct effect that removing veterinarians from the critical skills list has had on respondents. However, it must be said that it has only been 8 months since the removal and we anticipate that, should we redo this survey in a year, responses will likely differ.

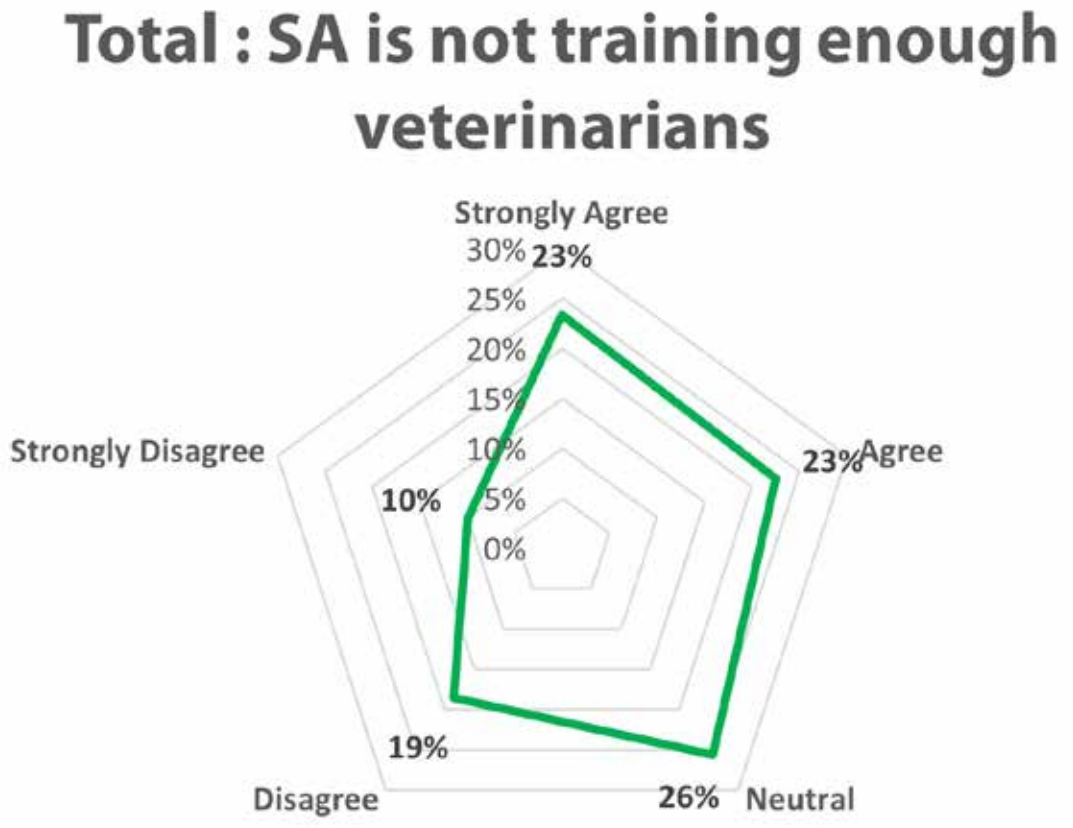
Training of Veterinarians

In addressing the scarcity, we requested veterinarians to answer a few questions on the training of veterinarians. Are we training a sufficient number of veterinarians? Will a second veterinary faculty alleviate the pressure?



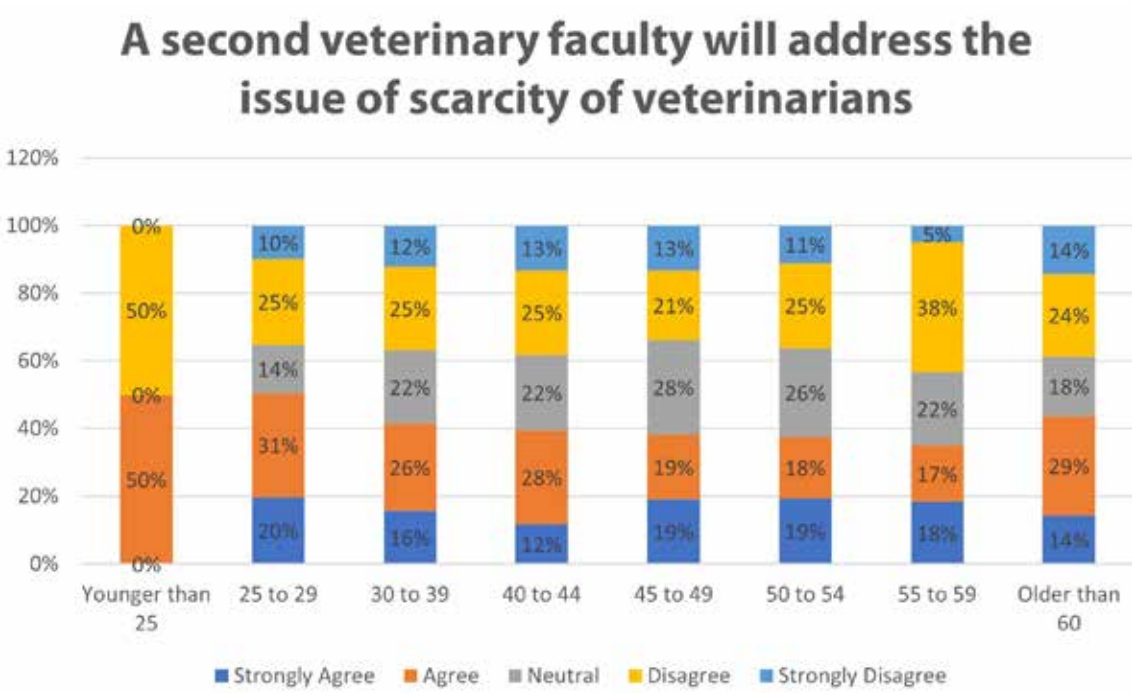
In reporting the results, we deemed it important to stratify the data by age groups to see if any meaningful differences exist in the perceptions of younger vs older veterinarians. In terms of the analysis, it does not appear to be the case. Interestingly, however, is the number of neutral responses obtained.

As some people are not familiar with reading radar-type graphs, the graph below is interpreted as follows: the farther away the data point is from the centre, the bigger the incidence is.

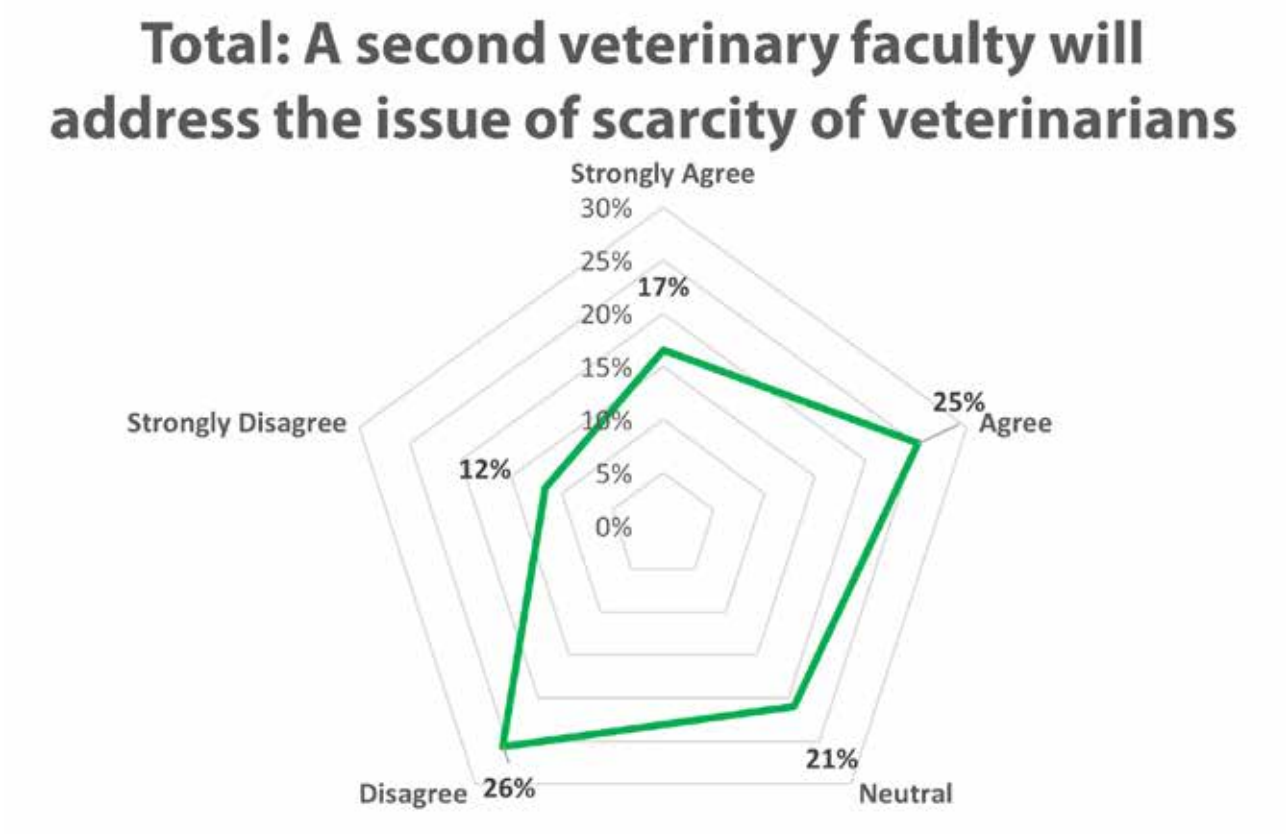


It is clear that significant bias exists from neutral towards the Agree and Strongly Agree categories.

Will a second veterinary faculty address these issues?



The responses to these questions were not as clear-cut and fairly evenly spread along age groups and the Likert scale.

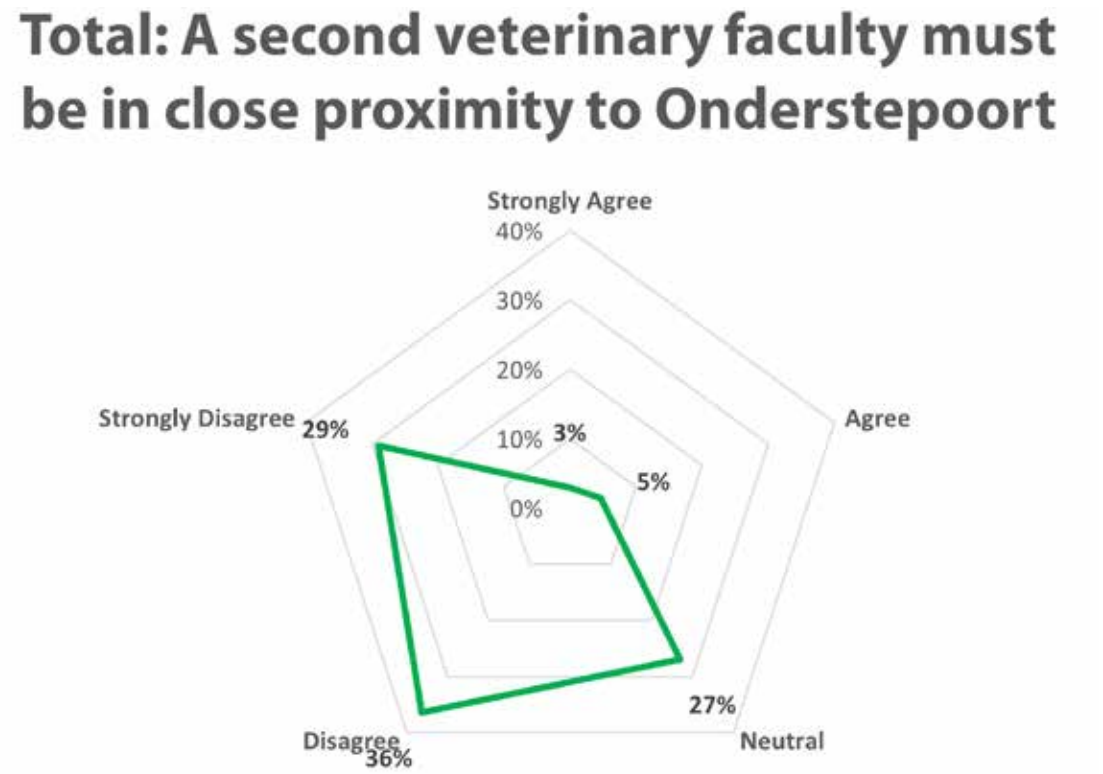


In reviewing the total figures – there are very similar response numbers in the Agree and Disagree categories (25% vs 26%). Similarly, for Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree (17% vs 12%). Being neutral, the balance of 21% indicates a profession divided on this issue.

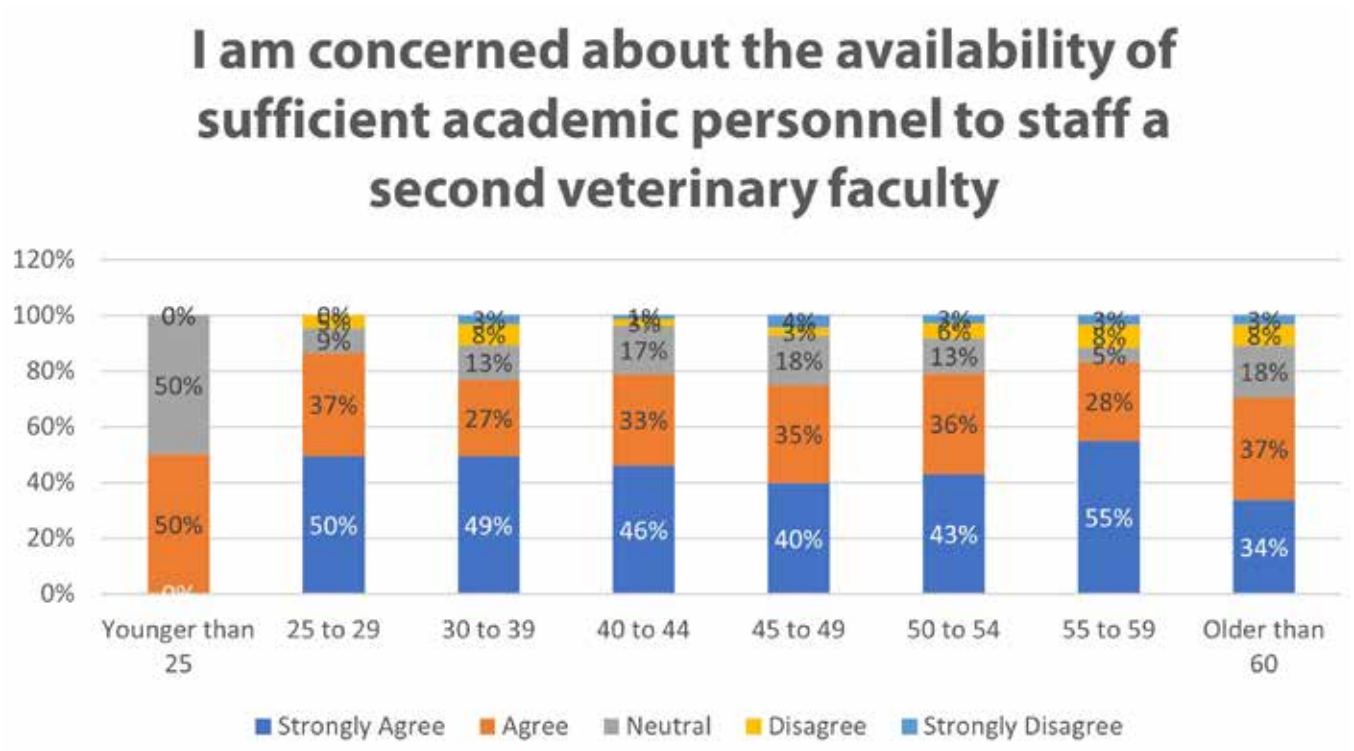
With SAVA having been involved in several discussions over the past few years on a potential second veterinary faculty, we also deemed it appropriate to ask some pertinent questions about a potential second faculty. The concerns raised by respondents echo the concerns that SAVA's Board and various committees have voiced.

Recent information we have been exposed to indicates that a second veterinary faculty may be in rather close proximity to Onderstepoort. Does that make sense?

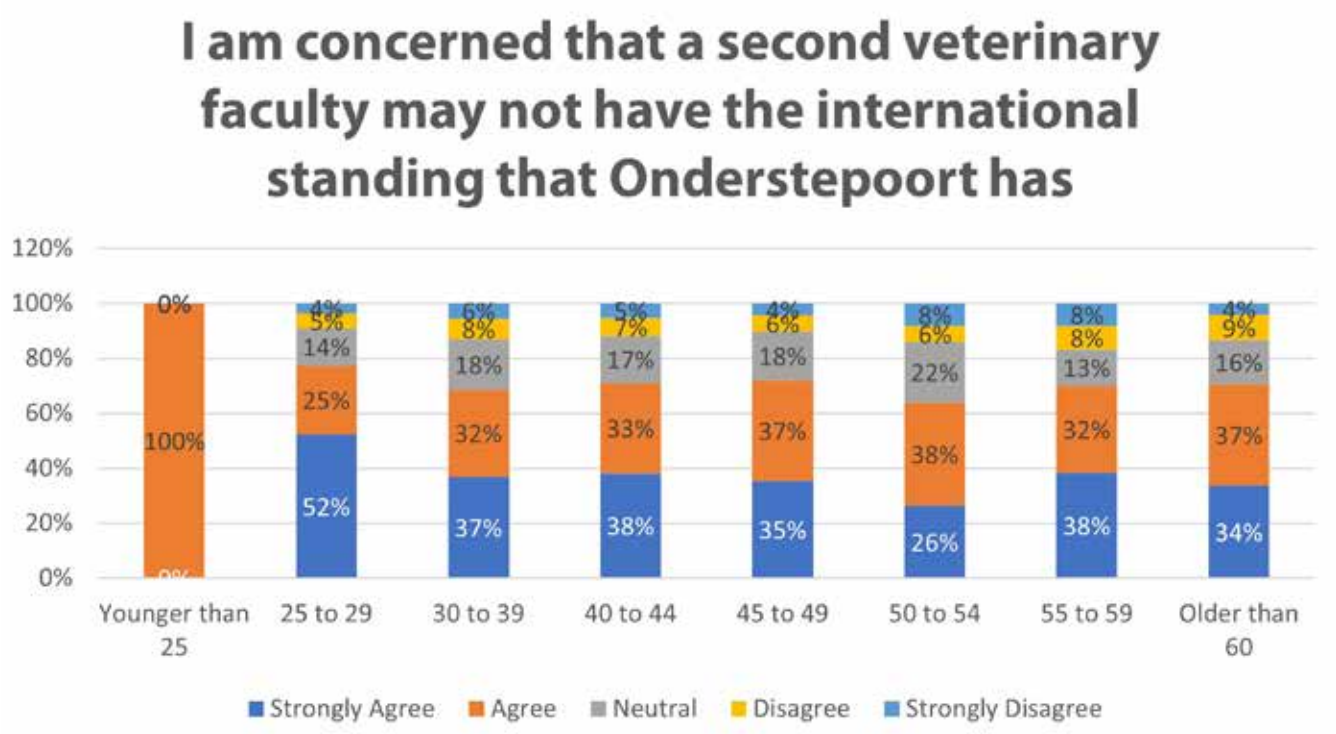




Evidently, 64% of respondents do not think it a good idea to place the second veterinary faculty close to Onderstepoort, with 27% staying neutral on this topic.

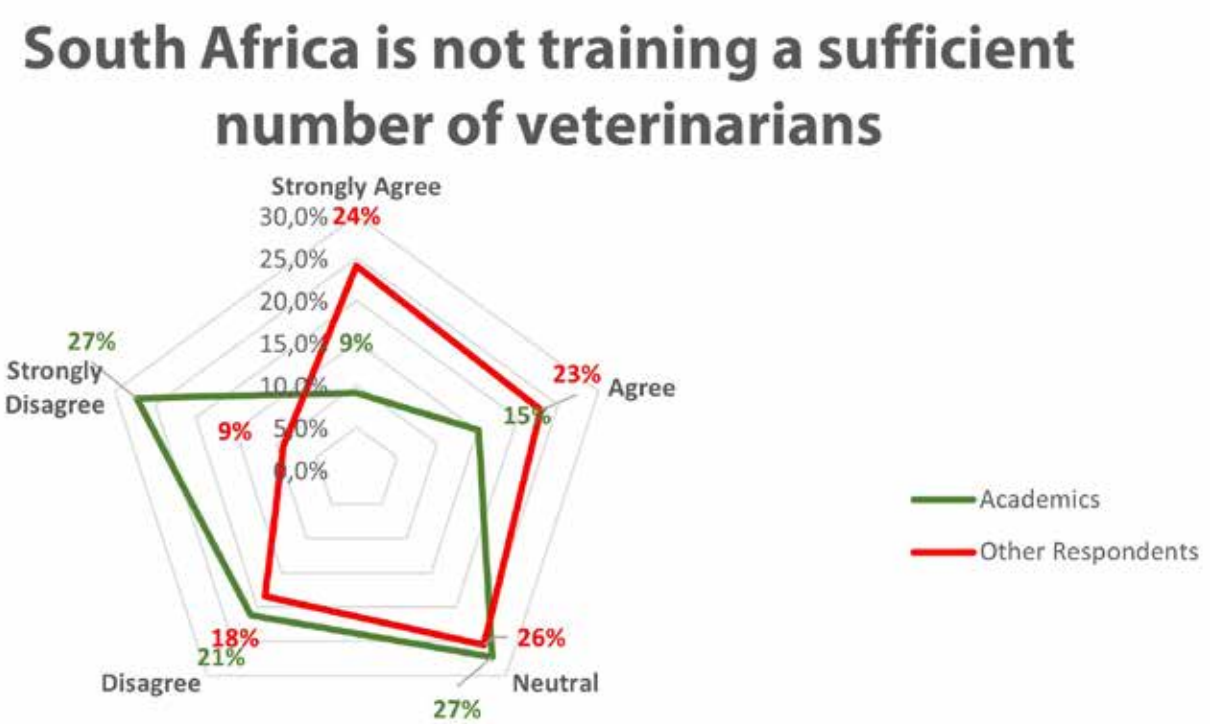


The graph above depicts the high level of concern among all age groups of respondents regarding sourcing academic personnel. In total, respondents that agreed or strongly agreed numbers to 78%.

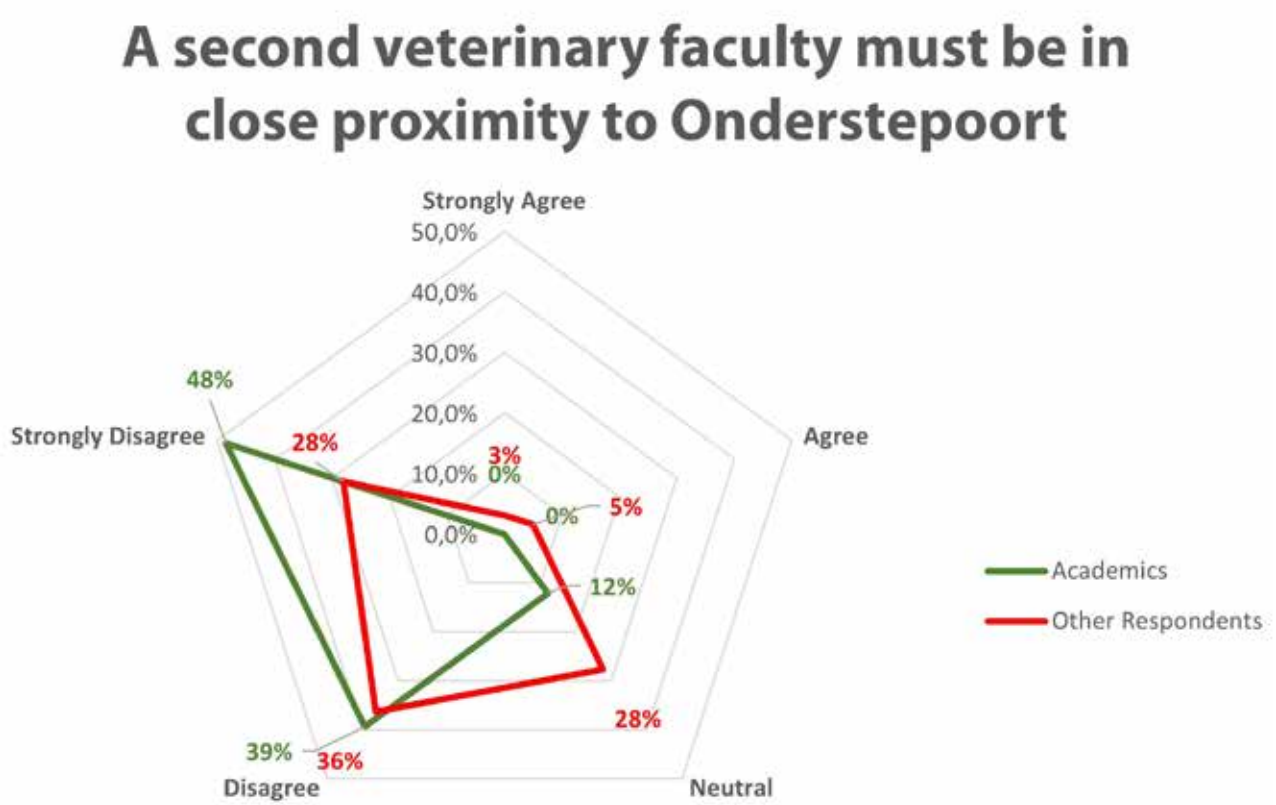


In the above graph, 70% of respondents indicated concern that graduates from a new veterinary faculty may not have the international standing of Onderstepoort.

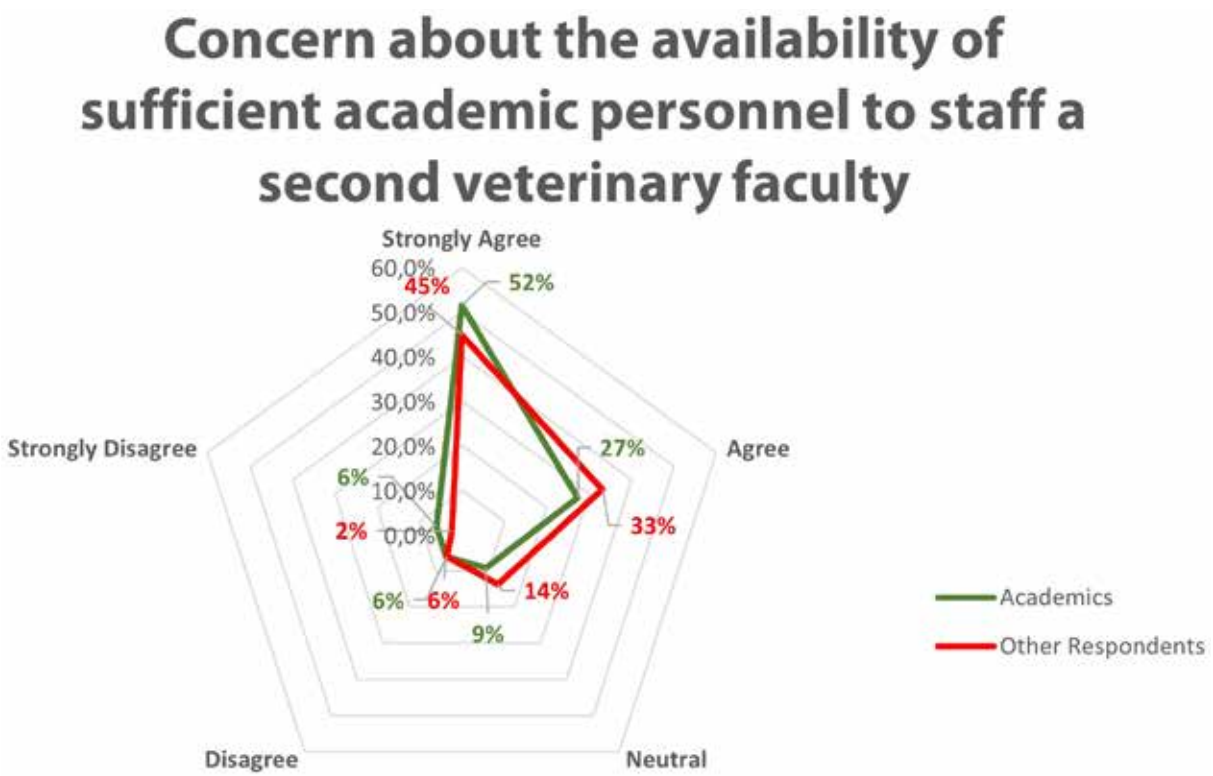
But what do our academics think? Of the total 706 respondents, 33 identified themselves as academics. In honesty, this may not be deemed a large sample – however, remember that South Africa only has one veterinary faculty, and the sample size is probably as representative as it could be under the circumstances.



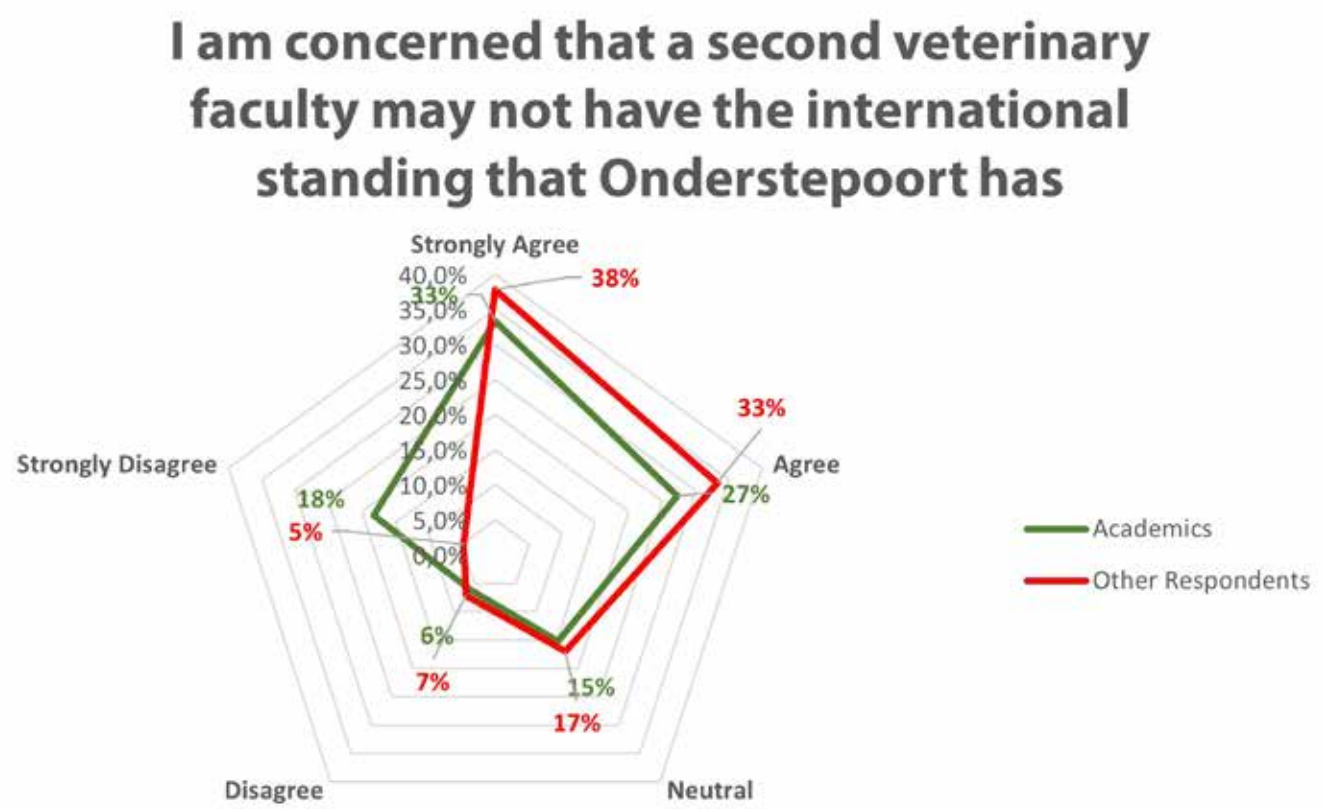
It is interesting to note the diametrically opposed views in Strongly Agree and Strongly Disagree between academics and other respondents



A very strong response from the academics – 88% indicate that they either disagree or strongly disagree that a second veterinary faculty should be located close to Onderstepoort.



When asked about the concern about the availability of sufficient academic personnel, results from both academics and other respondents were almost a carbon copy. For both the scales Agree and Strongly Agree, the different groups totalled 78%.

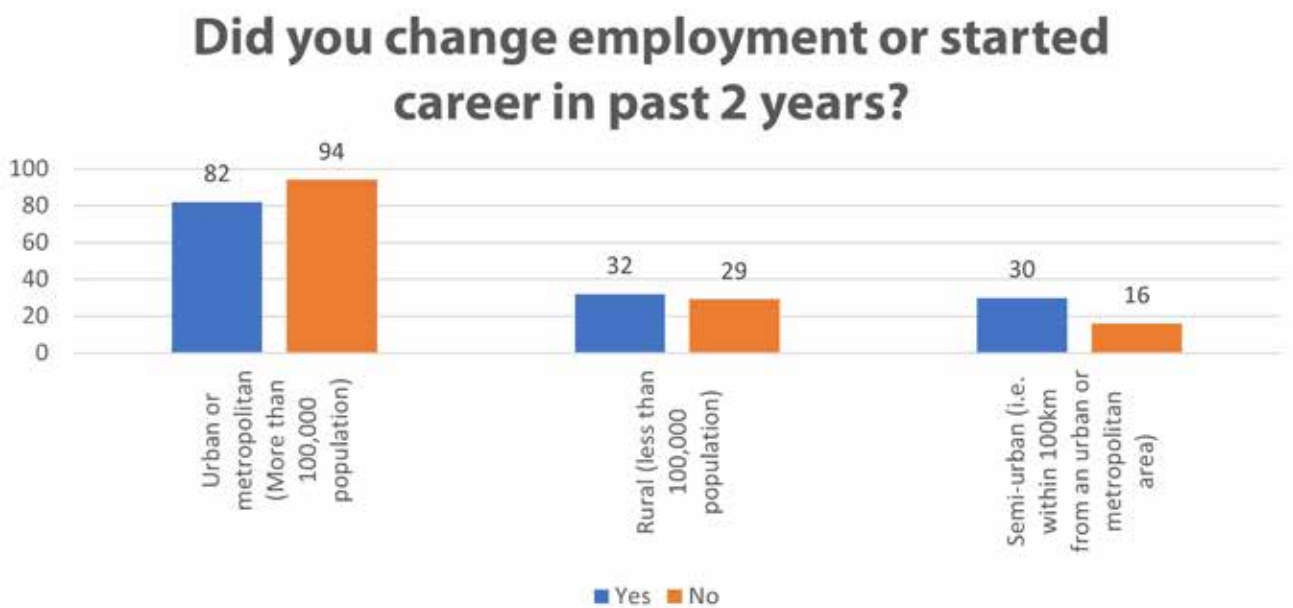


Again, academic and other respondents are in general agreement – a second veterinary faculty is at risk of being unequal in terms of international standing.

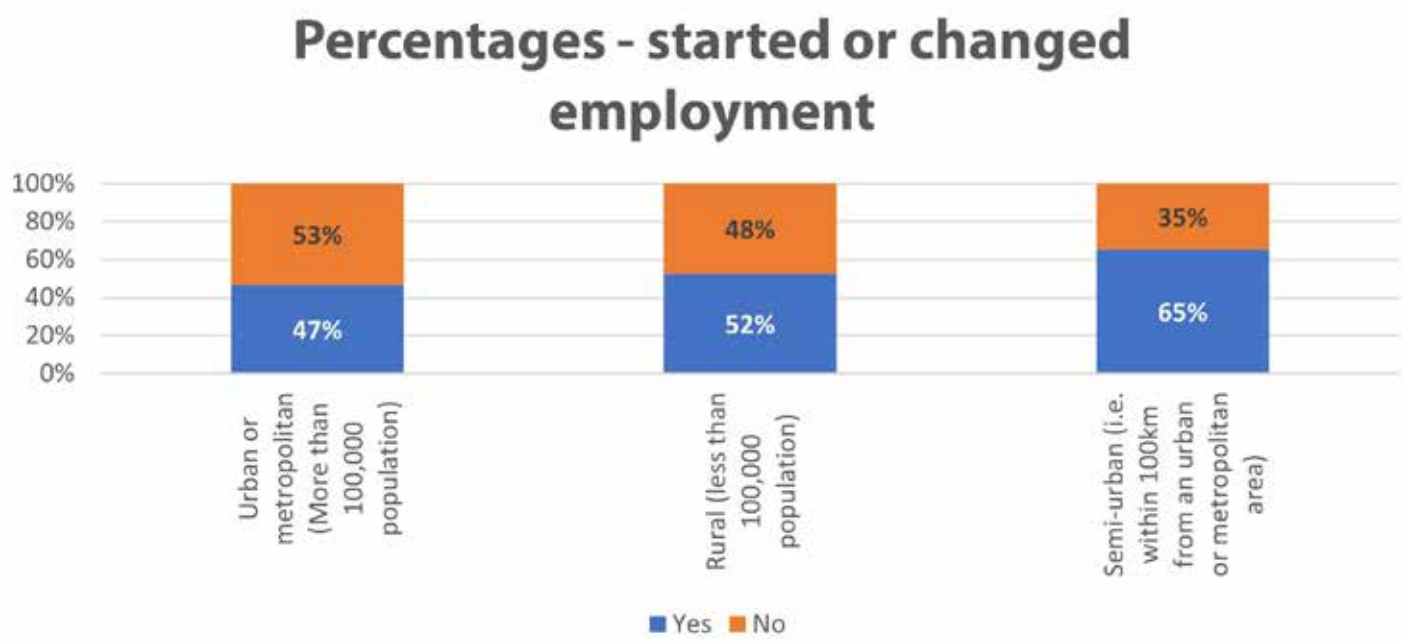
Employees

Noting that we have identified through job applications and job applicants that there is a scarcity of veterinarians in South Africa, we deemed it noteworthy to try and understand where job applicants prefer to work.

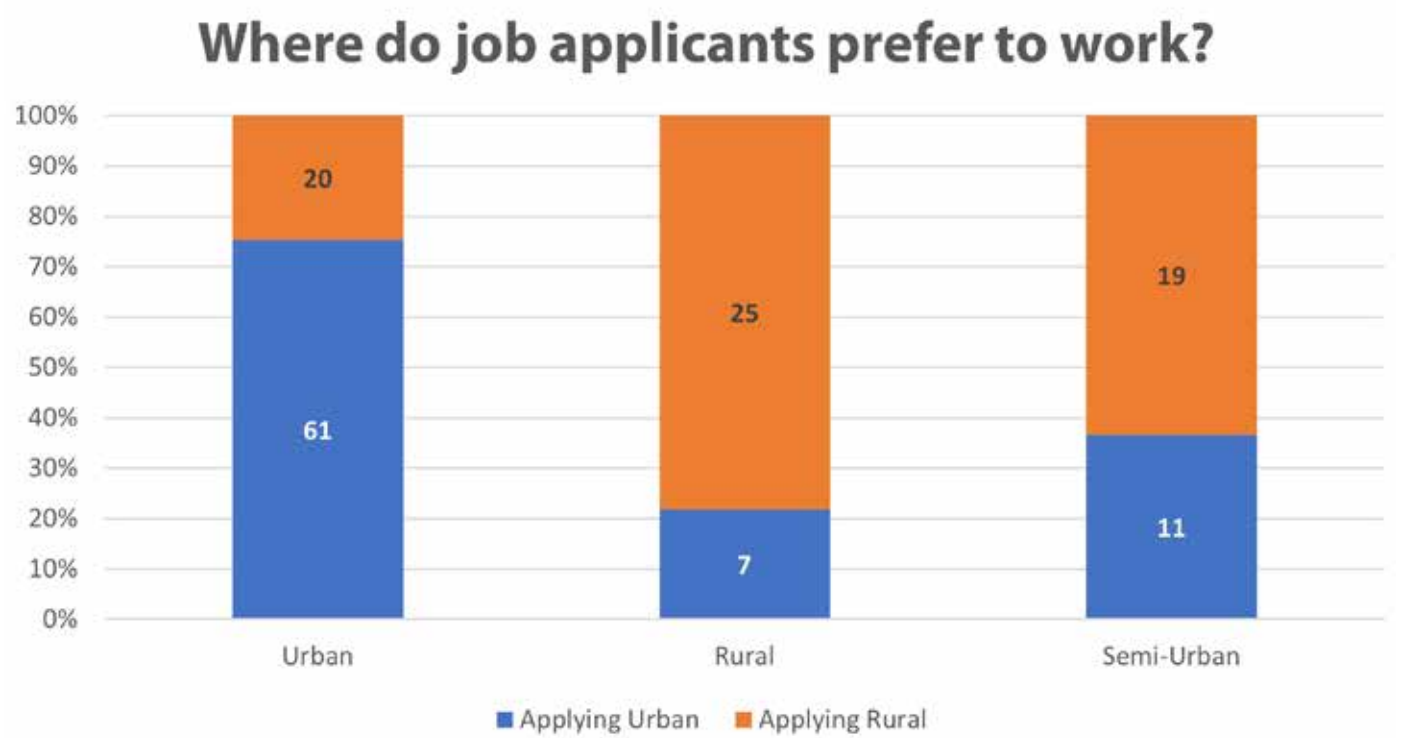
Firstly, some base information to understand the size of the subset of the population data that we had to analyse. A total of 283 respondents indicated that they are *not* decision-makers in a practice.



When viewing the data based on their <u>current</u> place of work, it is not surprising that 62% of respondents stay in urban areas, 22% in rural areas and 16% in semi-urban areas.

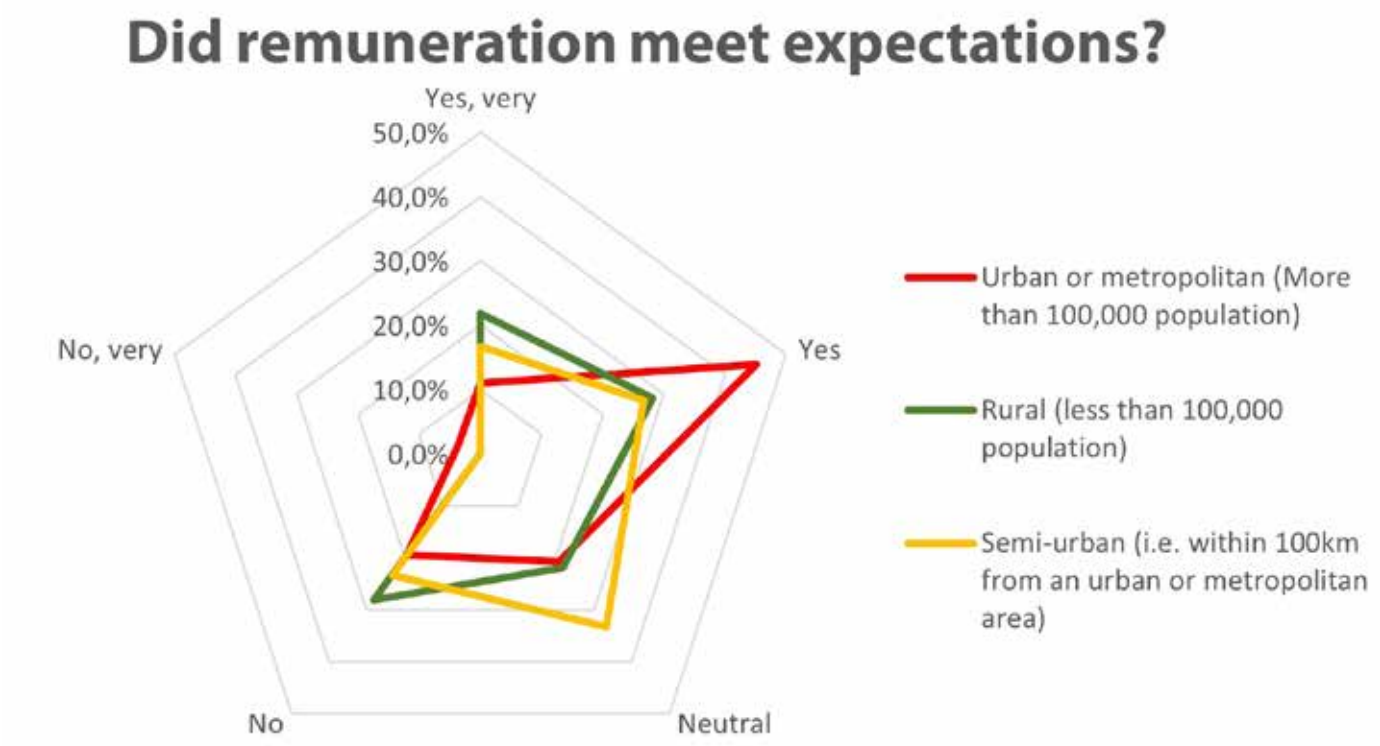


Interestingly, it appears that roughly 50% (143 of 283) of respondents started or changed employment in the past two years – this relates to a rather substantial implied employee turnover rate. We will consider doing an additional survey to understand the reasons. Semi-urban areas had the largest changes in employment, at 65% of respondents.



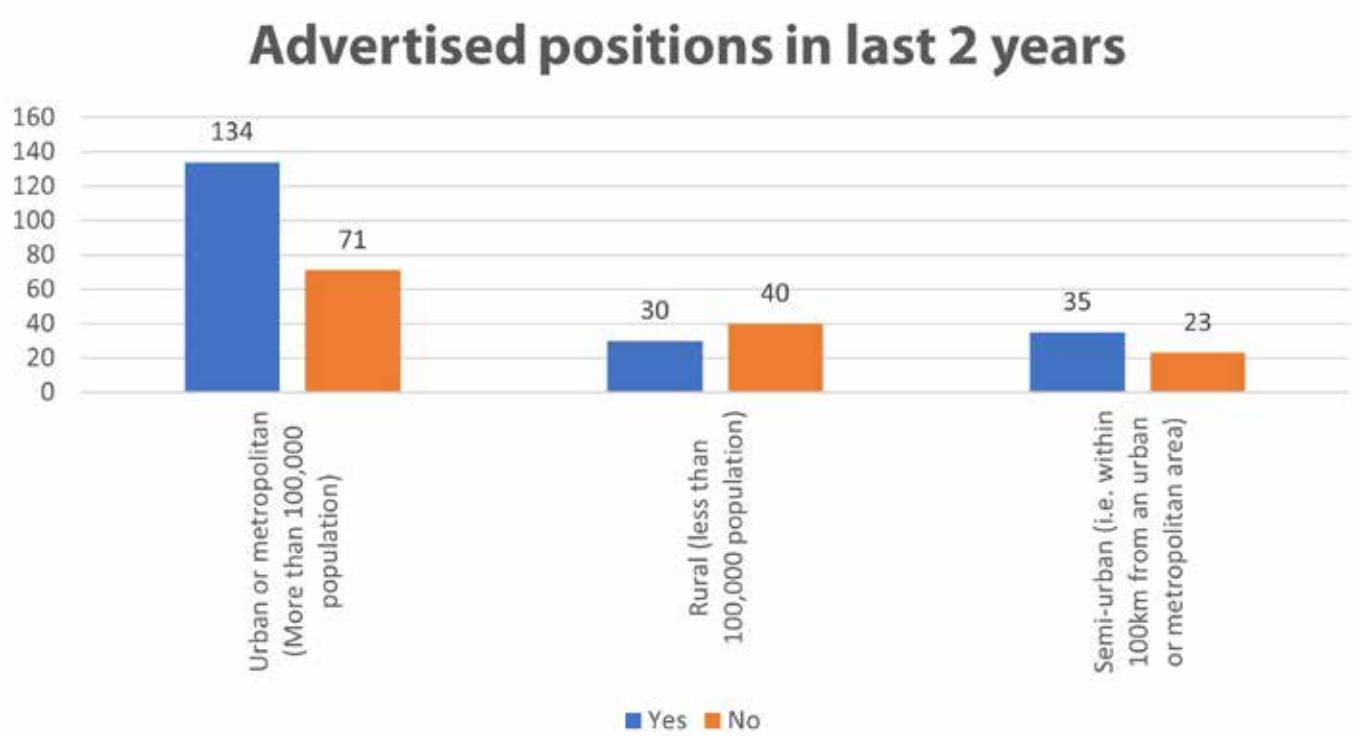
The graph above gives an interesting perspective (the numbers inside the column indicate the number, not the percentage, but the total column height indicative of percentage terms). A brief summation can be inferred as follows:

- *If you work in an urban area, you are likely to apply for jobs in an urban area (75%)*
- *If you work in a rural area, you are inclined to apply for jobs in a rural setting (78%*
- *The "transfer" rate, meaning going from urban to rural or vice versa, is rather similar (25% vs 20%)*
- *Semi-urban respondents are more likely to apply for jobs in rural areas than in urban areas (63%)*

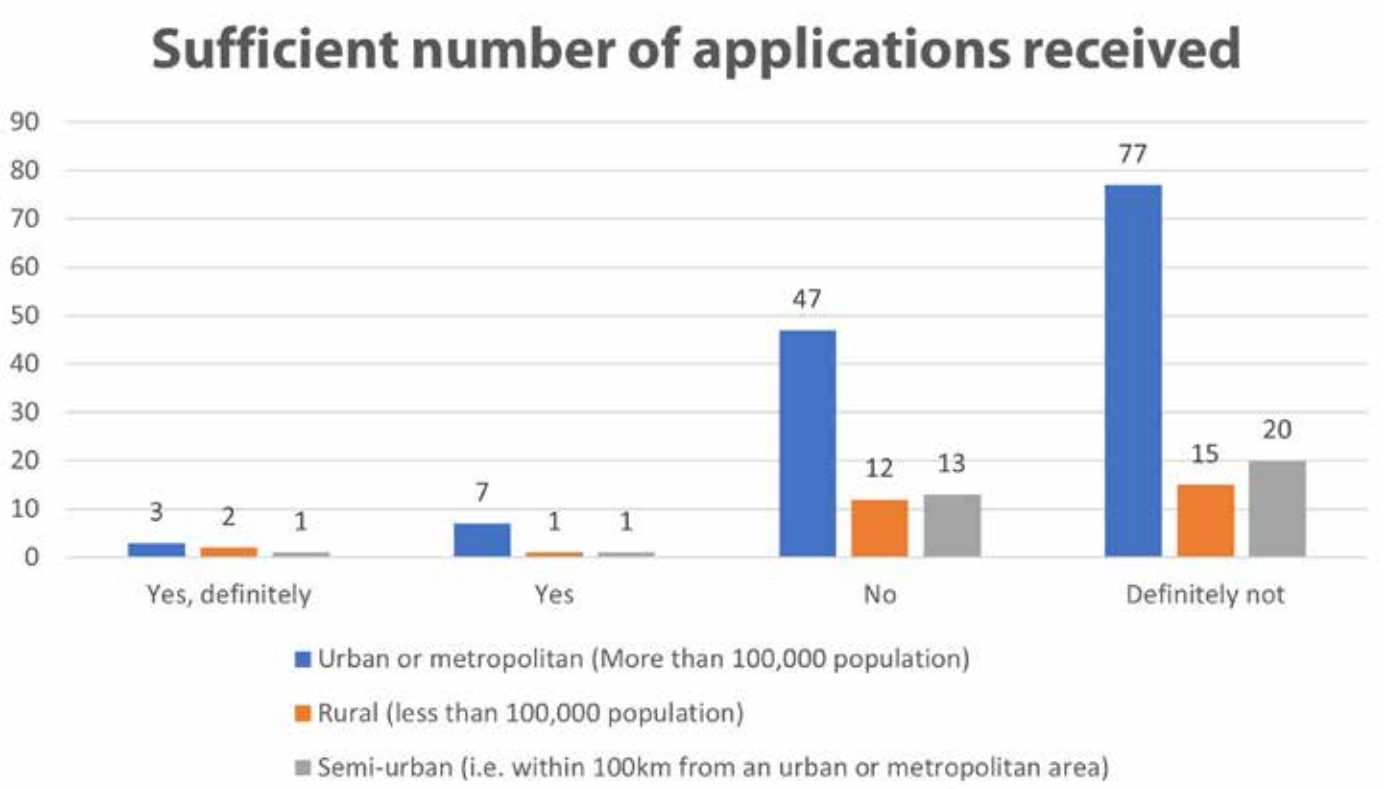


When asked whether employees were satisfied with the remuneration they were offered, 52% of the total respondents answered either Yes or Yes, very. Respondents indicating neutrality number 24% - this implies that, for employees that started their career or changed employment in the last two years, 76% were at the very least neutral with respect to remuneration.

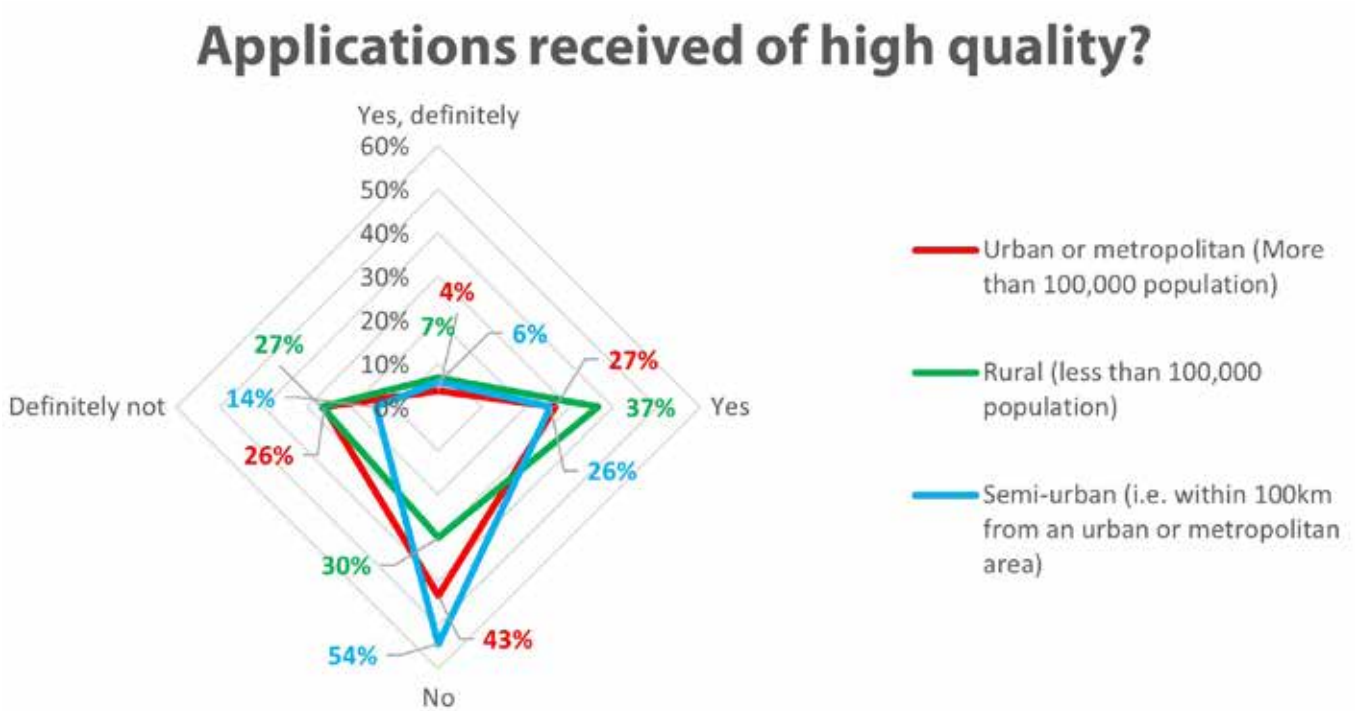
Employers



Roughly 60% (199 respondents) of the 333 respondents indicated that they are decision-makers in practices have advertised positions in the last two years. We believe this to be of sufficient size to be able to gather important information.

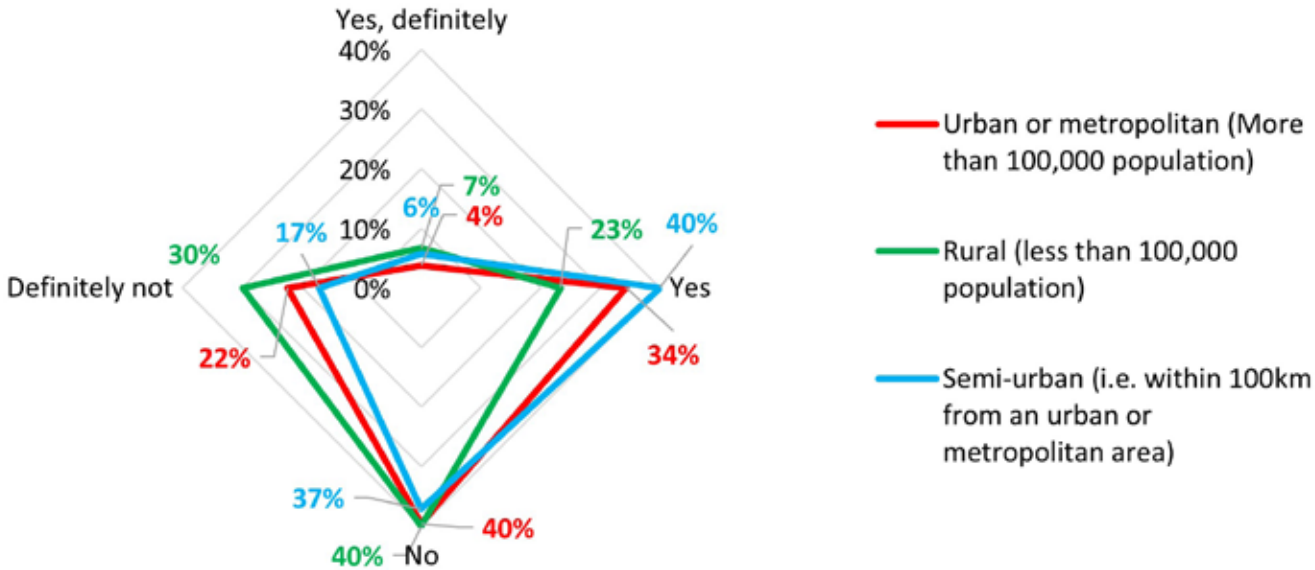


It is evident from the above graph that practices have not been receiving a sufficient number of applications. In total, 92% of practices indicated either No, or Definitely Not. This ties in with the graph that confirms the duration to fill positions – a critical number of positions remain vacant after a year.



The perception of the quality of applications received from job applicants is concerning – rural applications tended to fare slightly better. Still, the principal balance of responses indicates a negative perception of application quality. A total of 67% of respondents indicated either No or Definitely Not.

Applicants interviewed possessed the relevant experience and skills suited to the available position



Compared to the previous graph, applicants fared slightly better in the interviewers' perceptions. However, it does provide sufficient information for potential future research – are the expectations of the practices employing new staff too high, or is the quality of available staff too low, or is it a combination of the two?

Conclusion

To recap, the following questions begged answers which we hoped the survey could confirm or deny of us.

It is perceived common cause that veterinarians are emigrating. We wanted to know whether this perception stands up to scrutiny. If so, who are they (age, sex, geographical location)?

It is clear that, particularly in the younger age groups, a worrying statistic has emerged. Half of veterinarians younger than 39 have either begun emigration or are seriously considering doing so. Safety and Security, Economic Reasons are the primary drivers of this decision.

It has also been confirmed that, despite several members' concerns that SAVA impacts the decision of veterinarians to emigrate, it is resoundingly not the case.

Was the removal of veterinarians from the scarce skills list justified?

Unsurprisingly, veterinarians' view of the veterinary profession is that it is a scarce skill. But does it stand up to closer scrutiny? By matching the views of employers and employees through the speed at which positions are filled/accepted, we can surmise, without a doubt, that it is a scarce skill. Since it has only been eight months since the removal, most veterinarians have not yet been affected directly – however, we anticipate this position to change in due course.

Employers are concerned about the quality of applications and interviews but instead appoint staff due to severe shortages. Since employees appear to be able to select their geographical workplace easily and the

>>> 25

type of work they will be doing and are generally satisfied with the remuneration offered, it appears that the market for veterinarians is disproportionately influenced by supply-side economics.

Will a second veterinary faculty alleviate the scarcity of veterinarians?

Firstly, it was predominantly agreed by all respondents that we are not training enough veterinarians.

However, when responses from academics are pitted against other veterinarians on this question, their positions are almost diametrically opposed.

Where both academics and other veterinarians held particularly strong views, were on the following issues:

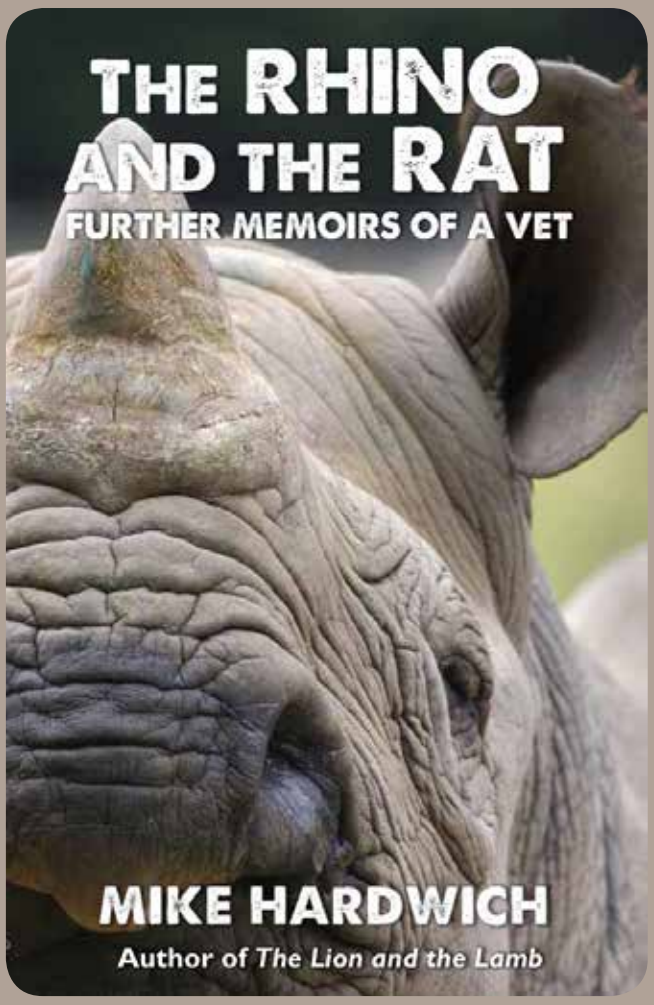
1. A second veterinary faculty should not be located close to Onderstepoort
2. A grave concern exists on sufficient academic personnel to staff the second veterinary faculty.
3. The second veterinary may not have the same international standing that Onderstepoort has. It has the potential to skew applications towards Onderstepoort and result in actual or perceived inequality of qualifying veterinarians by local and international employers.

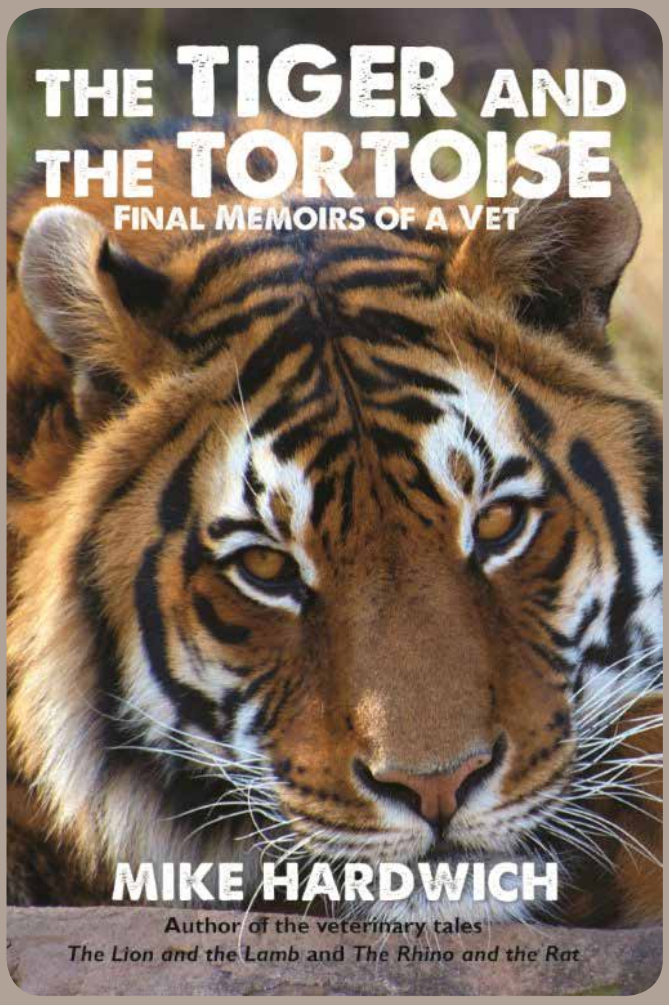
Since there is a myriad of ways to present the relationships between different questions and respondents, we attempted to highlight some of the areas that were glaring, had appropriate sample sizes and relevant relationships.

If any member has any further relational queries between different questions and/or respondents, we will be more than happy to perform the analysis. If deemed relevant for a larger group, we will consider publishing additional articles in the VetNews for this.









As a country vet whose territory covers the rich valleys and farmland of KwaZulu-Natal, his clients range from cattle farmers to owners of domestic pets, from game ranchers to circuses. The demands on a vet are constant and often arrive at very inconvenient times. Called upon day and night, Mike brings to each case his skills, ingenuity and years of experience, and although he never loses sight of his aim of preserving and improving the lives of the animals he is called upon to treat, sometimes he is sorely challenged by their owners.

Whether he is describing the difficult birth of a two-headed calf, discovering sheep scab on the Isle of Man, caring for Dorothy the elephant in her declining years, or helping Reggie the rat's grieving owner accept his impending demise, Mike's compassion and pragmatic humour never seem to flag.

These enjoyable tales of the trials, tribulations and triumphs of a veterinarian who always sleeps with one ear cocked, will leave you wanting more.....

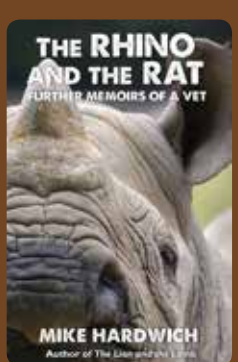


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Prof Gareth Bath, gfbath@gmail.com
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The 2023 SAEVA congress will be held over 4 days, from the 16th to the 19th of February 2023, in KwaZulu -Natal, South Africa. The Congress committee of SAEVA invites scientific abstracts for presentation as short (30 min) oral presentations. Papers reviewing recent advances, or relating to research into matters concerning relevant topics that may be of interest to equine veterinarians, will be considered. Scientists, Private practitioners and State Veterinarians, are encouraged to submit abstracts. Single case reports will also be accepted if of exceptional interest. Presentations not accepted for oral presentations may be selected to be presented as posters.
Authors wishing to submit abstracts must be able to present on any day of the congress.

Please submit your abstract on the link below:
https://bit.ly/SAEVA_Abstracts2023

DEADLINE: 10 December 2022

South African Veterinary Association
Suid-Afrikaanse Veterinêre Vereniging

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR SAVA AWARDS AND HONORARY MEMBERSHIP 2023

Nominations for the SAVA Awards are invited. These awards are conferred on persons who have made exceptional and significant contributions in the fields of Veterinary Science or the Veterinary Profession and they serve as a prestigious form of recognition of distinguished service. They require sufficient but concise justification for the nomination in the category selected, as outlined in the criteria listed for each category. The presentation of awards will be made at a suitable venue and occasion identified by SAVA and this usually occurs every second year to coincide with the Gala Dinner of the SAVA Biennial Congress. Please adhere to the nomination guidelines as set out below.

1. GOLD MEDAL OF THE SAVA

Awarded to any person, in recognition of outstanding and sustained scientific achievement, with a major impact in the field of veterinary science in South Africa. The medal will only be awarded once to a particular person, and there will be one award per year. The award requires a very comprehensive curriculum vitae and motivation.

2. PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Awarded to any veterinarian registered with the SAVC in recognition of outstanding service to and advancement of the veterinary profession in South Africa. The award will only be bestowed once on a particular person, and there will be one award per year. The award requires a very comprehensive curriculum vitae and motivation. .

3. BOSWELL AWARD

Awarded to any member of the SAVA for eminent service rendered to the profession through the SAVA. The award may be bestowed upon more than one person in a particular year.

4. CLINICAL AWARD OF THE SAVA

Awarded to any veterinarian or group of veterinarians who are registered with the SAVC and have excelled in applied veterinary practice. There is a limit of one award per clinical discipline per year. Past recipients become eligible for another award after a period of five years, for a different contribution.

5. RESEARCH AWARD OF THE SAVA

Awarded to one or more veterinarians for a body of research related to Veterinary Science, and published in scientific journals, that has made an important contribution to a particular field of study. Recipients of this award may be eligible for nomination for new original research. Submission to the Awards Committee may be made by candidates themselves.

6. YOUNG VETERINARIAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Awarded to one veterinarian registered with the SAVC per year, younger than 35 years of age or who has not been registered for longer than 10 years and who has made a significant contribution to veterinary science in his / her work sphere.

7. SOGA MEDAL

Awarded in recognition of exceptional community service rendered by a veterinarian registered with the SAVC or a veterinary student enrolled at a South African veterinary faculty. In addition to veterinary-related services, other forms of community service may be considered to support the nomination.

8. CITATION OF THE SAVA

The SAVA may bestow a citation upon one or more persons, including non-veterinarians, in recognition of specific achievements and / or meritorious contributions to the veterinary profession or the SAVA. More than one citation may be bestowed per year.

9. HONORARY LIFE MEMBER

Any SAVA member who has rendered long and outstanding service to the veterinary profession may be awarded Honorary Life Membership. Honorary Life Membership will not be granted to more than three people in one year.

10. HONORARY ASSOCIATE LIFE MEMBER

Any person who is not a veterinarian and who has rendered outstanding service to veterinary science, or the veterinary profession may be awarded honorary associate life membership. Honorary Associate Life Membership will not be granted to more than three people in one year.

All nominations must be supported by:

- Submissions must be made on the official nomination form available from the SAVA office.
- A brief motivation in terms of the conditions of the specific award, including the impact the work of the nominee has had. Evidence supporting the motivation, such as testimonials, may be included.
- A full *curriculum vitae* of the nominee, including a list of publication(s) where applicable and all the contact details of the nominee.
- Copy (ies) of the relevant publication(s) in the case of the Research Award.

Please note that:

- Any member of the SAVA may submit nominations, while others making nominations must include the support and signature of a SAVA member. Nominators are encouraged to channel their nominations via a SAVA Group or Branch.
- Non-SAVA members may be nominated for all categories except the Boswell Award and Honorary Life Membership.
- Unsuccessful nominations of previous years may, at the discretion of the Awards Committee, be held over for consideration in the following year.
- Where the nominator and seconder have indicated their permission, award categories of nominations could be changed by the Awards Committee.
- Members of the Awards Committee are permitted to propose or second candidates for awards, on condition that they recuse themselves when such nominations are discussed.

The onus is on members to submit appropriate nominations by the due date.

Failure to comply with the above will lead to disqualification of the nomination.

All nominations, in electronic format, marked for the attention of Prof G Bath, Chairperson, Awards Committee of the SAVA, must reach the SAVA Secretary Elize Nicholas elize@sava.co.za by 31st March 2023

Nomination forms may be obtained from Vethouse or the SAVA website or contact Elize Nicholas: elize@sava.co.za or Tel: 012-346 1150 / 072-274 5434

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Dear SAVA member

Please note that Vethouse will close on Thursday, 22 December 2022 at 12:00 and resume business on 04 January 2023.

SAVA wishes all its members and their families a joyous festive season and everything of the best for the year ahead.

Kind regards
Gert Steyn: Managing Director

Geagte SAVV lid

Neem asseblief kennis dat Vethuis sal sluit op Donderdag, 22 Desember 2022 om 12:00 en sal heropen op 04 Januarie 2023.

Die SAVV wens alle lede en hul families 'n wonderlike feestyd en alles van die beste vir die jaar wat voorlê.

Vriendelike groete
Gert Steyn: Besturende Direkteur



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South African Veterinary Association
Suid-Afrikaanse Veterinêre Vereniging

We, the members of the Association, resolve at all times:

- To honour our profession and the Veterinary Oath
- To maintain and uphold high professional and scientific standards
- To use our professional knowledge, skills and resources to protect and promote the health and welfare of animals and humans
- To further the status and image of the veterinarian and to foster and enrich veterinary science
- To promote the interests of our Association and fellowship amongst its members.

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- Ons professie in ere te hou en die Eed na te kom
- 'n Hoë professionele en wetenskaplike peil te handhaaf en te onderhou
- Ons professionele kennis, vaardigheid en hulpbronne aan te wend ter beskerming en bevordering van die gesondheid en welsyn van dier en mens
- Die status en beeld van die veearts te bevorder en die veeartsenykunde te verryk
- Die belange van ons Vereniging en die genootskap tussen sy lede te bevorder.



We honour and remember the contributions made by our colleagues who recently passed away.

Dr John Campbell Corbett: 08/05/1950 – 06/10/2022
Dr Alan Edward Fair: 11/11/1934 – 04/03/2022

We honour their contribution to our profession and society in general and pray that their families and loved ones will find the strength to carry them through these times of bereavement.

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The Wildlife Group of the SAVA Congress will be held over 3 days from 9 - 11 March 2023 at 26D South, Muldersdrift, Gauteng, South Africa.

The themes will focus on Immobilisation updates, air and other transport, disease and intensive management but any paper of interest will be considered.

Presenters may present remotely if they cannot attend in person. In person presenters will be given first preference.

We aim to provide an international platform for researchers and veterinarians with an interest in wildlife and wildlife management to present their knowledge and experience.

The Congress committee of The Wildlife Group of the SAVA invites abstracts for presentation as free communications as well as case studies and research results. Presentations can be either oral presentations or posters.

Papers reviewing recent advances, or relating to research into matters concerning relevant topics that may be of interest to wildlife veterinarians will be considered.
Practising veterinarians are encouraged to submit abstracts.
Full manuscripts will be given preference should an oversupply of submissions occur.

DEADLINE: 15 January 2023

Wildlife Group of the South African Veterinary Association

The WOAH Collaborating Centre contributes to improving wildlife health and management through training and is a proud partner of the Wildlife Congress 2023

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Dysseldorp Pet Sterilization Campaign 6 – 8 October 2022

Pet animals are incredibly vulnerable and reliant on their owners to ensure that they are kept in the best health and cannot breed uncontrollably, resulting in too many unwanted litters, which ultimately leads to neglect and suffering. But what to do when you live in a small little town, in the middle of nowhere, with the closest veterinarian miles away and your income can hardly supply for your minimum calorie needs?

These are the little towns that EnviroVet CVC aim to reach. On 3 October, the team headed off to such little town, 30km to the East of Oudtshoorn and 420km away from Cape Town: - Dysselsdorp is in the Klein Karoo, part of the Garden Route District and within the Municipality of Oudtshoorn in the Western Cape Province.

The settlement originated from a London Mission Station that was established in 1826.The human population has since grown to more than 12000 inhabitants, owning a total of almost 1800 dogs and cats.

No Pet Population Management strategy has ever been designed or implemented here. It was immediately noticeable that most residents of this community are indigent and have very little or no income and no transport (other than a few donkey carts) No formal businesses have been established in the area.

It is a known fact that healthy animals are vital to healthy communities and that is why pet population control is critical. On the first day working in the community, we encouraged pet owners, who would otherwise not have the means to secure this critical procedure for their dogs and cats, to take up this opportunity to have their animals sterilised. We were extremely happy with the response, as everyone welcomed the help offered and expressed their gratitude.

For the first time ever, not a single owner refused to have his/her pet sterilised. We felt welcome, safe and had the assistance of an abundance of volunteer helpers for the duration of the campaign.

Timing of the project was ideal because it was during school holidays. Crowds of children eagerly participated in educational discussions held outside by our AHT team member. Small groups of children also took turns to watch the procedures on the operating table and many questions had to be answered.

A clean-up challenge was launched, and many black bags of rubbish, collected by the children from the streets, were responsibly disposed of by the pleased community leaders at the end of the day.

After the 1st day of surgery on 4 October, it became very apparent that we had come in time for the start of spring. Not only were the flowers blossoming, but so were many pregnant bellies!

Over the 3-day period, a total of 160 animals were sterilised. Stats of the animals sterilised are set out below:

	Sterilised	Pregnant	Number of foetuses	Postpartum <6weeks
Male Cats	**26**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Female Cats	**33**	**15**	**49**	**3**
Male Dogs	**40**	**-**	**-**	**-**
Female Dogs	**61**	**3**	**16**	**10**
TOTAL	**160**	**18**	**65**	**13**

Summary of other observations:

1. The general body score of the animals was good, with only a few being underweight
2. Many of the dogs were tick infested. It was interesting to note that fleas were not present, except on a few dogs. The incidence of mange was very low.
3. The ratio of dogs to cats was normal at roughly 2:1. The absence of any feral cat colony is a sure indication of poverty in the community (lack of any extra food)
4. The disposition of the animals was very good – it was evident that these animals were used to human interaction, because they showed no aggression
5. TVT incidence is an indication of rampant breeding and lack of the presence of pet health care workers. Six patients were treated for this disease and should recover in full.

All the animals that were sterilised, were vaccinated against Rabies and animals under the age of 1 year also received their core vaccinations. In addition, each animal was treated for endo- and ectoparasites. Each patient was also sent home with a food parcel.

Since Dysselsdorp is a geographic isolated community, we will be able to quantitively measure the effectiveness of a mass sterilisation programme in the area. Before this can be done, at least 70% of the pets need to be sterilised. In the meantime, collaboration with an AWO in Oudtshoorn has been initiated to further our educational efforts during the campaign. It would be wonderful to have a follow-up campaign in the not-too-distant future.

As always, projects like these are only possible due to the generosity from donors. The financial donor for this project was ARGOA. Thank you!







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SIX PUBLIC HEALTH DANGERS LURKING IN VETERINARY PRACTICES

How to Protect Your Practice Against Liability

Dr Trudie Prinsloo, Legalvet Services; E-mail: trudie@legalvetservices.co.za



This article is intended to provide information and educate veterinarians on relevant aspects of the law. It is not intended as personal legal advice. SAVA is not responsible or liable for any advice or other information provided herein.

Modern veterinary practices are generally beautiful, inviting spaces designed to make animal owners and their pets feel welcome and safe. Despite this, there are inherent public health risks in veterinary practices. Veterinarians should be aware of these health hazards and take the necessary steps to protect the public. Practices should also protect their businesses from any potential claims relating to these dangers.

Six Lurking Public Health Dangers

1. ***Infectious diseases***

   Veterinarians are aware of the dangers of zoonotic diseases but do not often think of them as potential hazards for their clients and other visitors. Unfortunately, it is a real risk. Recently I heard of a man who was critically ill in hospital for several weeks with life-threatening septicaemia. The patient and his medical team blamed the veterinary hospital he visited a day or two before becoming ill. According to this man, the veterinary consultation room was dirty and bloody when he had to take his pet in. It might have been because the vet dealt with an emergency before seeing the client. I do not know if the man's infection actually originated there, but that is their perception. If nothing else, it can do the practice's reputation immeasurable harm. However, if the infection could be traced back to the practice, it could lead to a large claim against it.

2. ***Dangerous drugs and chemicals***

   Several very dangerous drugs and hazardous chemicals are used in veterinary practices and should be kept far away from laypersons. It is especially important for wildlife veterinarians who usually work outside with potentially lethal drugs, surrounded by laypersons who are very curious and eager to assist. Any potential habit-forming drugs that might be targeted either for illegal resale or personal use should also be stored and handled with great caution.

3. ***Ionizing Radiation***

   Veterinarians and staff are at a much higher risk of the dangers of ionizing radiation than the public. Nevertheless, it also poses a risk to clients if they are asked to help restrain their pets when radiographs are taken.

4. ***Medical waste***

   Veterinary practices inevitably generate medical waste. The handling of medical waste is regulated by national, provincial, and local legislation. It creates a complex legal structure that varies slightly depending on the province and municipal area in which a practice is situated. A general principle that applies to all medical waste creators is that the creator of the waste remains responsible for the waste until the end of the cycle. It places an onerous duty on veterinary practices.

5. ***Dangerous animals***

   Veterinary patients are capable of inflicting significant and even life-threatening injuries through bites, scratches, kicks, and crushing. Although owners are also responsible for controlling their animals, a veterinary practice must provide

an environment, equipment, and facilities where this can be done properly, and the public's safety should never be compromised. Injuries to the public due to an uncontrolled patient can potentially lead to significant claims against a veterinary practice.

6. ***Slip and trip dangers***

Any premises visited by members of the public are subject to claims when a person is injured because of a hazard created at the premises. A typical example is slippery tiles that may cause someone to fall or uneven pavement leading to a fall and injury. Such a fall can cause significant injury and can lead to large financial claims, often amounting to a few million Rand. As people become more aware of their rights and more litigious, the risk of such claims being instituted is significant.

Protect the Public

- ***Put up signs to warn people of any potential risks***

  No-entry and danger signs should be placed in areas where the public is not allowed, for example, where X-rays are taken. Signs warning people of a potential hazard, such as a slope that could cause a fall, will also be helpful. It is best to fix any potential hazards that may cause a fall, but signs are helpful as an interim emergency measure.

- ***Adhere to relevant legislation***

  Legislation such as the Medicines and Related Substances Act, No. 101 of 1965, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, No. 85 of 1993, and the various waste management acts create legal duties for veterinarians. However, adherence to this will generally also create a safe environment for the public.

- ***Be sensible***

  When planning the layout of a new practice or alterations to an existing practice, keep the safety of the public in mind. Make hygiene and infection control a priority. Consider the flow through the practice and design it to minimize the risk of visitors and patients becoming infected or exposed to other health hazards.

Protect your practice

Even when you have done everything reasonable to protect the public, unforeseen accidents can still happen.

There are a few ways in which you can protect your business from the devastating consequences of potentially large civil claims.

- ***Disclaimers***

  Well-worded and strategically placed disclaimers can go a long way to protect a business against civil claims for injury and damage to or loss of property. It must not be worded too widely and be easy to read and understand.

- ***Indemnities***

  Let all clients sign an indemnity when they first visit your facility that will protect the practice in case of an unfortunate incident. Such indemnities must be fairly specific, and the client's attention must be drawn to them. Indemnities must also be easy to read and understand. Words in small print on the back of a document will not assist.

- ***Insurance***

  Veterinary practices should have third-party insurance to cover them against accidental injuries to clients and other visitors of the practice. Make sure that you specifically ask your broker or insurer to include this in your insurance and ensure that there is adequate coverage for potential claims.

If you have any questions in this regard, please feel free to contact me at trudie@legalvetservices.co.za



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I hope this article finds you and your families well and safe!!! Last month we discussed the concept of gratitude and not living a life obsessed with what others have while putting us in a position to bloom, attract the right people and run with a clear focus toward our goals. This month we will extend that concept further and talk about preparation given the upcoming December holidays, which inevitably compels us to reflect on the past year and start thinking about the year ahead (starting the year-long trek once again).

Two of the main ingredients mentioned and used repeatedly are energy and preparation. So how do we go about obtaining these ingredients?

How do I keep my energy high?

1. Eat right: essentially eating real food and less processed foods; exposure to free radicals increases with the wrong foods. Aristotle said, "You are what you eat" in 342 BC.
2. Eat less: obesity has become a global problem; how ironic to die from too much eating. I do not advocate that you go hungry, but rather go healthy.
3. Exercise more: commit to moving around more; have a regular exercise program as a habit. The simplest way to start is to walk more – count your steps.
4. Supplement: the research is very clear on this. You would be wise to add supplements to your food intake. I would start with a quality multivitamin and then tailor-make the rest to match your individual needs and life stage.
5. Drink water: water keeps the body hydrated and helps with flushing out toxins; 8 glasses of water a day is the general rule, but exercise and individual factors will impact this recommendation. Perhaps a quality filter system may be a wise choice.
6. Avoid smoking & alcohol: this is always a sensitive subject, especially when the recommendation comes from a non-smoking and non-drinking individual like myself. However, the medical, socioeconomic, and physical facts are well documented, and I can only recommend that your decisions are wise and responsible for you.
7. Rest: the amount of sleep required will vary from person to person and can be between 5-9 hours. Contrary to popular belief, achieving success and getting sufficient sleep is possible.

It is important to understand that there is no point in setting goals and failing to look after ourselves, so much so that we cannot enjoy the rewards of having achieved those goals. The next ingredient is preparation. I have heard of many people wishing that they could hibernate at various times in their lives.

That would certainly be very useful prior to taking on a major challenge; however, we do have the ability to plan and gather whatever resources we need to complete a project successfully.

For that to happen, we need to:

- Know where you are going: have a clear picture of where you want to go and what you want to accomplish before you start work on a mission/project/goal/objective. A strong sense of purpose and direction can give you energy and help sustain you until you succeed.
- Know which people genuinely support you: these individuals will support you emotionally and are just as interested in your success as you are. Avoid negative people (critical, over-protective or jealous) that discourage you. Be around people that feed your soul.
- Establish items you have: be grateful for the seemingly mundane things like transport, homes, internet connectivity, laptop, etc., but also take stock of the necessary resources you will need to complete your goal.
- Determine what you still need: this list will include physical and other resources like time, impact on your family, patience, courage, etc.
- Evaluate the cost: we should never start a project without first looking at both the timeline and projected budget for the successful establishment or completion of the project.
- Establish your internal resources: this is the mental and psychological fuel required for the journey ahead. Keeping the vision alive in the face of criticism, setbacks, etc. Do I know how to fill my heart and mind with the right input or gather reliable information? Willingness to learn and prepare adequately. Do I need a coach/mentor? Are there certain skills I need to develop along the way?

I would also like to recommend that you use a diary along the journey to keep track of the priorities and goals you have set for yourself.

Visualize the celebration of your success. It will also energize and motivate you.

Activating your will to energize yourself and prepare yourself for the trek is what carries a person across time, distance, and hurdles all the way to success!

Next month, we will continue looking at other concepts and ideas and improving our quality of life and overall performance at work and home.

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CALCIUM AND PHOSPHORUS

GETTING THE BALANCE RIGHT



Written by Linda Böswald and Britta Dobenecker

It is critical to ensure that a puppy is neither over- nor under-supplied with certain nutrients and minerals during the growth phase, but this can be more difficult than it first appears, as discussed in this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Developmental orthopedic diseases (DODs) such as osteochondrosis, joint dysplasia, osteodystrophy or bone deformities are frequently seen in dogs, with fast-growing large and giant breeds being at particular risk. The maturation phase is a major life stage for all species, but is of critical importance in fast-growing young animals that have significant skeletal vulnerability during this period, and dogs come into this category. Feeding a balanced diet that provides adequate amounts of energy and nutrients is the basis for a healthy musculoskeletal system, as deficiencies can exacerbate some conditions that are not primarily nutrition-related. Signs of DOD can vary from mild and transient lameness through to severe movement disorders, and can also involve painful deviation of one or more limbs and swelling of the joints. Malnutrition in the first few months of life can lead to lifelong impairment of an animal´s health.

The following key points are highlighted here but for the full article as well as pictures please scan the QR code below.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE

KEY POINTS

An adequate supply of calcium and phosphorus (both absolute and relative to each other) is crucial to ensure a dog's healthy skeletal development.

Regular weighing and comparison with recommended growth curves is the gold standard to monitor optimal energy supply in puppies, as body condition scoring is not suitable.

Calcium and phosphorus requirements for growing dogs depend on the expected mature body weight and age of the individual.

Excess protein intake in puppies does not cause problems, but energy supply should be restricted to ensure optimal growth rates and to help avoid developmental orthopedic disease.

CONCLUSION

Metabolizable energy and nutrient requirements change during growth, so a proper overview of a puppy's nutritional requirements requires regular ration adaptations. Whilst two-monthly reviews are supposedly adequate for dogs growing according to the recommended growth curve, all puppies should be weighed weekly, and the body weight compared to the optimal growth curve to monitor progress. If there is a deviation from the ideal body weight, the diet – and especially the ME supplied – needs to be adapted immediately.

For simplicity, this article considers only metabolizable energy, calcium and phosphorus, but in general the requirement for all minerals, trace elements and vitamins should be included when reviewing the nutritional needs of a patient, and whilst the calculations are not difficult, they do illustrate that consideration of all the factors required to achieve a balanced diet is necessary.

Trichomoniasis in cattle: a review

Dr Chantelle Erwee,
Zoetis South Africa (Pty) Ltd
Technical Manager: Ruminants

Zoetis Animal Health Pages

FOR ANIMALS. FOR HEALTH. FOR YOU.

Trichomoniasis is an all-too-common venereal disease in cattle, with a likely worldwide distribution caused by a protozoa, namely *Tritrichomonas foetus*.

Since the parasite is transmitted through natural breeding (coitus), it is more often a disease of extensive beef herds.[2] Cows are infected by mating with an infected bull and vice versa. Infection rates in cows can vary from 30 to 90 %.[1,3,4] Bulls of all ages can remain permanently infected; this is, however, less likely to be the case in younger animals.[1] There seem to be a few hypotheses for this. One explanation is that the environment in the deeper epithelial crypts and additional mucosal folds in older bulls favour the growth and development of the anaerobic parasite due to the reduced oxygen tension.[2,3,4] Some other explanations indicate that breed differences might play a role and that there might be factors that can lead to a natural resistance in certain individual bulls, but further research is needed in this regard.[3]

Trichomoniasis in cows is characterized by a transient inflammation of the reproductive tract (endometriosis, cervicitis etc.).[2] Although the organism can be isolated from the female reproductive tract as soon as four days after infection; there is no apparent interference with fertilization or maternal recognition of pregnancy.[3,4] In fact, pathologic lesions are usually only found around day 50 of pregnancy, and one study showed peak foetal losses from day 50 to 70.[3,4.]

Consequently, the organism affects the female animal's reproductive performance. The main 'clinical sign' being embryonic/foetal death, usually followed by resorption, most often within the first two months of pregnancy.[1,3,4] These cows generally have no outwardly visible clinical signs. Other clinical signs that may occur, albeit rare, are post-coital pyometra, a mummified foetus or a visible abortion.[1,3,4] Bulls hardly show any clinical signs.[2,3]

Therefore, if the herd does not have a defined breeding season, the disease can go unnoticed while it wreaks havoc.[2] Cows go on to be repeat breeders with an early return to estrus, which can result in poor pregnancy rates, or producers might notice that cows are pregnant later in the breeding season than expected.[3]

The knock-on effect of this is that these cows calve late in the calving season, meaning calves will weigh less at weaning or the calf crop might be reduced.[2,3] Depending on the production system, this could have potentially severe negative economic consequences for the producer. Trichomoniasis has been reported to cause reduced weaning weights of between 4 to 10 % and potentially lead to a reduced calf crop size of up to 50 %.[2,3] This can lead to a significant reduction in the return on investment per cow.

Because the clinical signs of trichomoniasis are quite non-specific and impossible to distinguish from other venereal diseases such as vibriosis, it is important to isolate the organism to make a diagnosis.[1] Bulls are often tested because they are the more likely carriers and, secondly because it makes more sense from a practical and logistical standpoint. Preputial sheath scraping samples are taken and sent for PCR and/or culture.[1] All bulls should be tested at least three times a week apart. It is advised that bulls are given 1 to 2 weeks of sexual rest before testing to avoid false negative results.[3]

Once confronted with a positive result, it is important to have a plan of action. Therefore, once a diagnosis of trichomoniasis is confirmed, biosecurity measures should be put in place to prevent the further spread of the disease and to get it under control as soon as possible.

Controlling the disease might require a more intensive approach than what the producer was used to in the past. Starting with bulls – treating infected bulls might be expensive, not easy, and not always effective. Medication might not be registered for such use or allowed to be used in food-producing animals. Therefore, culling of an infected bull is often recommended. Conversely, cows can often rid themselves of the infection within three months after breeding, with exceptions.[3] Note that a small percentage (~ < 1 %) of cows can become carriers; some animals have been reported to be persistently infected for as long as 300 days.[3,4]

Some cows can carry the infection through pregnancy, deliver a normal calf and still test positive afterwards.[3,4] Cows can elicit an amnestic immune response to infection, but this partial protection may only serve to shorten the duration of subsequent infections and will only last up to approximately 15 months if that long.[3,4]

With that being said, the cow herd should be separated from the bulls and divided into two groups:[3,4]

1. Female animals that are most likely uninfected (cows with calves and virgin heifers)
2. Potentially infected, non-productive cows

OR

1. Cows > 5 months pregnant + cows with calves + virgin heifers
2. Cows < 5 months pregnant, open cows

Vaccination of uninfected animals is a valuable part of the disease management plan. Although vaccination might not prevent future infection, it plays an important role in reducing the shedding and

spread of the organism, thereby helping reduce foetal loss and duration of infection.[3] Trichguard® contains killed, concentrated cultures of *Tritrichomonas foetus* suspended in a special oil adjuvant and can aid in the prevention of the disease when vaccinating healthy cattle.

Because of how difficult it is to get rid of trichomoniasis once established in a herd and the economic consequences associated with pregnancy loss, lower calf weights, culling of bulls, testing etc., it is definitely a case of prevention is better than cure. Clients should be advised not to lease out their bulls and only purchase virgin animals or those from reputable sources.[1,3]

As the saying goes, 'good fences, make good neighbours' – making sure fences are maintained and intact goes a long way to prevent wandering infected animals from spreading the disease. It won't necessarily stop the athletic high jumper bulls from jumping the fence, though, so knowing the status of the neighbouring herds is important.

If the worst-case scenario has occurred and animals have encountered an infected animal, isolate and test animals at risk. Co-mingling should be avoided as far as possible. Artificial insemination can be a consideration; however, trichomoniasis can survive in frozen semen, so semen straws must be procured from reputable sources.[3] Keeping a defined breeding season is recommended since it will enable farmers to pick up if there is a problem sooner rather than later. Implementing suitable management practices can potentially help prevent or eliminate trichomoniasis in a herd.[3]

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Life plus 23 without parole



Mike Lowry

Mike Lowry has been in veterinary practice for "life plus 23" years. In this column, he shares his experiences and opinions.

Some 40 years ago, I was involved with the start-up of several crocodile farms in Africa and the Middle East. I was also chairman of the Dr Geoff Harwin Memorial Trust; a trust set up after the untimely passing of the Animal Scientist extraordinaire and friend Geoff Harwin.

The latter fund decided to bring out Dr Jim Wiltbank, an Animal Scientist who had made huge strides in the American Cattle industry with ranches like King Ranch, for lectures.

I had the fortune of hosting Jim for a few weeks, and on one quiet Sunday, I decided to take him to one of the local crocodile farms. It was a very fulfilling visit as the entire science of the operation was in its embryotic stage; very little was known, and it was all starting from a very primary base. At the end of the visit, Jim was enthralled and mentioned to me that he would give up his life's work to come and do the primary research on this farm.

Skip ahead forty-five years; I have had the privilege of a similar experience in darkest Africa with upgrading a cattle herd in southern Gabon on the Congo border.

This herd is run of concessionary land measuring over 1 million hectares. It had, at its peak, a herd of 22 000 breeding cows, but with poor management and tropical diseases, the herd had been decimated to a mere 2000 breeding cows and 1800 followers. The new management, led by an international company, got stuck in to improving the entire operation and getting it up to world standards.

The facilities on this ranch are beyond all expectations. The laboratory is enough to make any vet teary-eyed with envy with all the top-of-the-range equipment from microscopes to ultrasounds, all the necessary surgical equipment, and much more.

My first trip was two years ago, and the mortality rate over the entire herd was close to 20% at that stage. Lung sickness was rife, as was sleeping sickness and all the tick-borne diseases; all those things we heard about as students but seldom believed we would ever see. The pregnancy tests were running at below 50%.

The dominant breed was nDama, a Jersey-like animal where the mature females were under 300 kilograms, and calves were born at between 10 and 15 kgs. According to archaeological findings, these cattle had been around for approximately 4000 years and were obviously well adapted to the harsh conditions of the tropics. Of interest is that this breed has a gland under the tail that is unique to the nDama and only found in them and the Jerseys. Who came from who?

The previous managers had tried to upgrade these cattle by crossing them with various "indigenous" African cattle, such as the Nguni and the Boran and several other breeds, such as the Senepol and the Bonsmara. All these crossbreeds had proved unsuccessful, and on studying the genomes, it was found that the nDama had a gene which provided Trypanosomes tolerance. The first cross with the nDama lost this gene; thus, the animals were susceptible to sleeping sickness.

A decision was made to stick to the nDama and develop this breed. nDama cattle had been found in neighbouring states, and the previous management had imported nearly 20000 breeding cows.

Virtually all of these had died due to the introduction of lung sickness with the importations. The breeding herd when I got there was only 2000 cows.

None of these animals was properly identifiable, and there were few records of their breeding performances.

Ear tagging had been repeatedly tried unsuccessfully due to the grass pastures being extremely tall and exceptionally hard – Hyperenia herta being the main grass. A large portion of the grazing was well over six feet tall, and mustering the cattle was time-consuming.

At the outset, it was decided that branding all animals with computer-tolerant numbers was a necessity. And, whilst doing this, the animals were also all dehorned.

The vaccination program and dipping were formulated, and the mortality started dropping within a few months. Very few ticks were seen on the cattle, and a decision was made to lengthen the intervals between dipping. It proved to be an unwise decision after the literature had been scoured regarding trypanosome control, particularly the control of Glossina, the transmitting fly.

A further major problem was the lack of suitable breeding bulls. High ratios were necessary because of the difficult pastures; there were just inadequate numbers. A decision was taken to do artificial insemination using freshly collected semen. The high ambient temperature meant semen handling would not be as crucial as it would be where lower temperatures played a part.

The animals were synchronized, and the entire process ran well, with results of 60% pregnancy on single inseminations.

It's been two years now, and the results are very rewarding. Mortality is down to less than 5%, which meant the survival of more than 500 animals over the past year. Pregnancy tests, overall, are closing in on 70%, and cattle numbers are up. It is hoped to achieve a figure of over 20000 breeding cows in seven to ten years.

As an aged vet, one could only dream about it all coming true; well-implemented basic science and the results speak for themselves.

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