

CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT FEBRUARY 2022

COVID-19 has largely defined my term as chair of SAEVA, which began in February 2020, and I have spent significant time managing the challenges it has presented. Finally, we have all had the opportunity to be vaccinated and thankfully the Omicron variant has been milder than initially expected. COVID-19 has placed even more stress on our already challenging and demanding careers and also resulted in increased client stress. We need to try to embrace this new world and find ways of adapting that allow us to remain healthy physically, mentally and emotionally. Condolences to everyone who has been affected directly or indirectly by loss or illness due to COVID.

1. AHS Vaccines

The critical and persistent unavailability of AHS vaccine from OBP has created an unacceptable situation and reflected poorly on the veterinary industry as a whole. It has jeopardised the welfare of our horses and the livestock industry in general. In 2014, R500 million was given to OBP to build a new vaccine plant however this never came to fruition. There are alleged governance issues, incompetence, and criminal activity at OBP, as is the case with many other SOEs. As a result, the current equipment is old and has not been maintained, resulting in breakdowns.

DALRRD, NAHF and Agbiz as well as other private organisations are endeavoring to address this crisis as a matter of urgency but procuring and updating equipment does not happen overnight. The possibility of private companies producing vaccines is also being investigated. I am in direct contact with NAHF and have also communicated with OBP regarding our serious concerns.

We will keep you updated as more information becomes available.

2. CPD and Policy documents

One of the few benefits of COVID is that almost unlimited access to CPD has become available on-line in the form of webinars, panel discussions and congresses, with exceptional content and speakers.

The following sources remain available to members:

- a. Equine Health Update – this is a comprehensive quarterly online magazine with up-to-date information in the form of abstracts, reviews, articles and other matters of interest. Thank you to Johnny Cave, the editor and Vetlink for producing the magazine.

- b. Free webinars – thank you to Johnny for sourcing numerous free and interesting webinars over the past year.
- c. BEVA membership with all its benefits is still available at a significant discount to all SAEVA members via the SAEVA website. This includes the BEVA Drugs App.
- d. Journal article access – not many members have made use of this free service paid for by SAEVA. Any article can be requested via the SAEVA website

A number of new policy documents have been added to the SAEVA website:

- a. Equine Vaccination and Certification for Competition and other Purposes – this policy document was sent to DALRRD for comment and while they can not endorse actions not controlled by the Animal Diseases Act 1984, they congratulated us on the document and recommended it be distributed to all veterinarians through the SAVC. I have submitted it to the SAVC and await their response.
- b. Veterinary Certificate for Mortality and Medical Insurance – this SAEVA document has been approved by all the equine insurance companies.
- c. Prepurchase Examination Report – this revised checklist style document has been expanded to include lameness locator findings and other optional examinations.
- d. SEAVA ECOD reporting and sample collection manual – transparent accurate disease reporting plays an important role in the assessment of countries, their veterinary services and their ability to trade in animals and animal products. I urge everyone to report confirmed or suspected diseases on the ECOD platform.

3. Congress

This year's physical congress has been postponed to 2 – 5 June with Roger Smith and Michael Schramme as our esteemed speakers. The topic is Poor Performance and Lameness in the Sport Horse and promises to be very informative with cutting edge content. The venue is The Blades, a bushveld venue on the banks of Roodeplaat Dam. Unfortunately, Myra Barret and David Frisbie who were initially scheduled to speak in 2021 and then again this year have declined to fly to SA with their family at this stage. Hopefully they will be available for our 2023 congress.

SAEVA also hosted a virtual “Ask an Expert” congress for horse owners last year. The purpose was to educate owners about their horses and when to call their vet in the best interests of the welfare of their horse(s).

There were 10 talks by 10 veterinarians including Sue Dyson and Steve O’Grady. Those who attended gave glowing reports of the quality of the information and the speakers and how much they had learnt.

Unfortunately, attendance could have been better despite the congress being advertised to all SAEF members.

4. YMG Mentor/Mentee Program

The plan for 2021 was that CCS vets and 4/5/6th year students were mentored by trained SAVA equine mentors. These mentors would receive a monthly remuneration from SAVA, sponsored by HWSETA, which, if desired, could be donated to SAEVA in order to help fund equine student events and congress attendance. We are sincerely grateful to those mentors who have donated their remuneration to SAEVA, and we commit to using this exclusively for YMG education. Unfortunately, this funding was limited to the mentoring of CCS vets last year due to funding issues on the part of HWSETA. Hopefully funding will be more forthcoming in 2022.

Please refer to the YMG report for more information with regard to the activities attended by their members.

5. Equine Insurance

We need to appreciate the value the equine insurance industry to our profession. It would not be possible for us to perform many procedures if the client did not have cover.

With this in mind SAEVA held another constructive meeting with the equine insurance industry in January this year. A number of pertinent topics were discussed, and clarity was requested from members regarding the definition of “critical care”. The condition must be both life threatening and an emergency to be considered critical care. More information will be available in the minutes which will be posted on the SAEVA website shortly.

We plan to hold another panel discussion at congress this year after it proved to be a popular session at the 2020 congress.

6. Phenylbutazone

After we appeared to have reached a dead-end with our endeavours to unban PBZ for equine use we were fortunate to be granted a virtual meeting with SAHPRA. Thanks to Deon van Tonder and Lamar International for their efforts in this regard. Alice Sigobodhla and her team made a commitment to determine why due process was not followed by the MCC at the time of banning. We requested SAHPRA to revisit our request to unban PBZ in the interests of the welfare of the horse.

7. SAVC

SAEVA has given input to the SAVC on a number of matters over the past year.

In 2020 council requested input into Rules and Regulations and Day-1 skills for veterinary physiotherapists. We made comprehensive submissions for both, and I am happy to report that the revised Rules and Regulations have been amended as per our suggestions. Last year council requested comments on the new draft rules for all para-veterinary professions and on Day 1 skills for veterinarians. We submitted input on the above particularly the AHT's and the physiotherapists again. We await council's response.

Four council members resigned in 2021 and nominations were called for to fill the vacancies. I submitted three nominations and two were elected. They are Sheelagh Higgerty and Izak Venter. Their term unfortunately ends on the 31 July 2022 along with all the other council members. They have agreed to stand again, and I have renominated all three (Sheelagh Higgerty, Izak Venter and Susan Fouche) for the following three-year term. We can nominate a total of 10 veterinarians, and I urge anyone who is prepared to stand, or knows anyone who is, to please contact me urgently. It is vital to our esteemed profession that

we have dedicated competent private practitioner representation on council.

There is ongoing investigation as to the cause for the four resignations from council in close succession.

SAEVA collaborated with Onderstepoort to compile a Day 1 Equine Skills questionnaire, for completion by private equine veterinarians, to assess the importance of various equine skills for new graduates entering equine practice. The questionnaire has been distributed on a number of platforms over the past year, but response has been poor. This is disappointing as the information is critical to inform O.P. of what is expected of new graduates in private equine practice.

I urge everyone to contribute otherwise we only have ourselves to blame if graduates do not possess the required skills.

I will post this on the members WA group again after this meeting.

8. Disease Outbreaks

Toward the middle of last year we had an “outbreak” of small colon impactions in a number of regions of the country. Despite many other parts of the world seeing similar outbreaks every 5 – 10 years a conclusive aetiology(s) has eluded researchers and experts. The only common factor appears to be cold weather. SEAVA offered to sponsor additional tests to try to determine an aetiology but results did not yield any additional information.

9. BEVA International Presidents Meeting

This was a virtual meeting and each president presented three key issues affecting their organisation. The most important problem was recruitment and retention of equine veterinarians in private practice. This would appear to be a worldwide challenge and the AAEP has set up a task team to do extensive research into the reasons and to find solutions. Factors such as student debt, long unpredictable hours, rude clients, and abuse of interns all play a role in adversely affecting vets' quality of life which has become increasingly important to millennials. Practice owner support, peer group support, shared afterhours, and company in the car all improved job satisfaction and retention. This

study is ongoing and new information will be published as it becomes available.

In closing I would like to thank all SAEVA members for their continued support during my tenure as chair of SAEVA.

As my term ends, I implore all of us to work together as an esteemed profession and help each other, remembering that our top priority above all should be the health and welfare of the horse.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all of my team for their dedication, support, time, and input over the last two challenging years. It has been an honour working with you and my job would not have been possible without you.

I welcome Camilla Weyer as the new chair and wish her all the best for her term, I am sure she will continue to steer SAEVA from strength to strength.