

# The role of the South African Veterinary Council, with special reference to the period 1982–2011

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The current South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) has a long and laborious history associated with the legislation responsible for its establishment. The forerunner of the SAVC, the South African Veterinary Board, was established in terms of the *Veterinary Act* 1933 (Act No. 16 of 1933), which was launched through Parliament as a private motion by Dr Hjalmar Reitz M.P. After several amendments, the Act was replaced with the *Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act* 1982 (Act No. 19 of 1982), superseding the existing Board with the SAVC. One of the reasons for replacing this Act was to comply with Government policy for professional statutory bodies to become self-funding, with fees paid by registered professionals, and to constitute councils that were more representative of the profession. Apart from providing some background information, this article was virtually entirely confined to some historic aspects of the SAVC, using, as its basis, the main developments that occurred during the terms of office of its various presidents, serving from 1982 to 2011. The presidents concerned are: Prof. B.C. Jansen (28 March 1983 – 28 March 1986), Dr G.E. Frost (14 April 1986 – 31 March 1992), Prof. R.I. Coubrough (07 April 1992 – 21 March 1994), Dr P.C. Ardington (21 March 1994 – 31 March 1998), Prof H.M. Terblanche (31 March 1998 – 31 March 2004), Prof. S.S. van den Berg (01 April 2004 – 30 July 2007) and Dr R. Moerane (06 August 2007 – 31 July 2013).

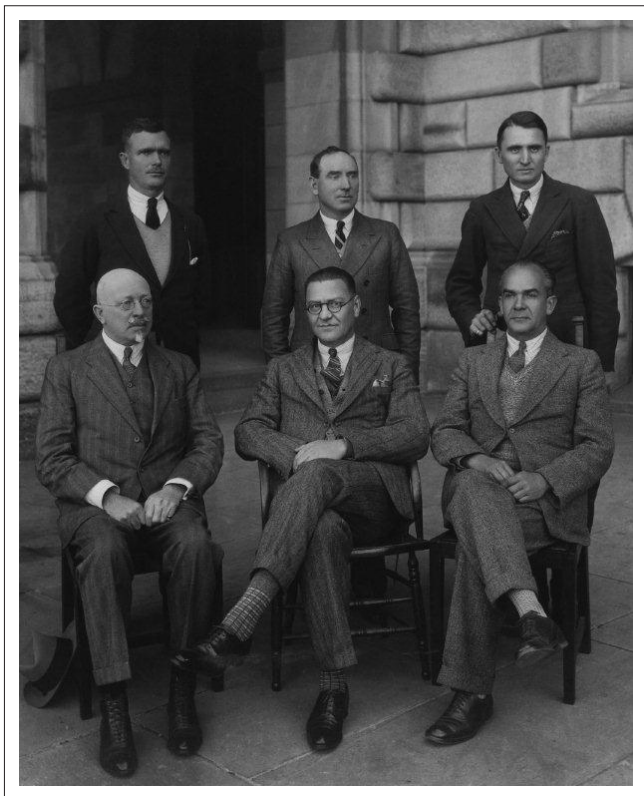
## Introduction

Before 1933, the Union of South Africa had no statutory regulation of the veterinary profession. On 08 March 1933, the *Veterinary Act* (Act No. 16 of 1933), launched through Parliament as a private motion by Dr Hjalmar Reitz M.P., was promulgated (Curson 1934). With amendments in 1963, 1972 and 1974, it served to regulate the profession by means of the South African Veterinary Board, appointed in terms of the Act, until 1982.

In Appendix II of his article entitled: *Steps leading to replacement of Natal Act 21/1899 by Union Act 16/1933*, Curson (1934) deals quite extensively with the laborious process – 'struggle for legal recognition ...' – of getting the 1933 Act legislated, naming the leading individuals and the professional organisation (i.e. especially the South African Veterinary Medical Association) involved in promoting the concept. The five members of the first Veterinary Board (all veterinarians except the Registrar) were: Dr P.R. Viljoen (chairman), Dr P.J. du Toit, Mr F.J. Carless, Mr A.C. Kirkpatrick and Dr H.H. Curson, with Mr J. Tromp serving as its Registrar (see Figure 1). Curson (1930) provides more information on the earlier phases of the 'struggle' – from 1903, when the Transvaal Veterinary Medical Association was inaugurated, until 1930 – in his article, also dealing with the provisional and later drafting processes before the Act was finally promulgated.

The main reasons for amending, repealing and replacing this Act were to comply with Government policy for professional statutory bodies to become self-funding, with fees paid by registered professionals and, congruent with that, to constitute councils that were more representative of the profession with an elected component serving a 3-year term. The *Veterinary Act* was replaced by the *Veterinary and Para-veterinary Professions Act* 1982 (Act No. 19 of 1982), which fulfilled these requirements and substituted the existing Veterinary Board with the South African Veterinary Council (SAVC) (Republic of South Africa 1982).

This article is virtually entirely confined to some historic aspects of the SAVC using, as its basis, the main developments that occurred during the terms of office of its various presidents serving from 1982 to October 2011, when the World Veterinary Congress 2011 was held in Cape Town. For information on the early stages of statutory regulation of the South African veterinary profession, the reader is referred to Curson's already mentioned publications (1930, 1934) on the establishment of the South African Veterinary Board.



Source: Photo provided by Dr Rudolph Bigalke

Sitting (left to right): Mr F.J. Carless, Dr P.R. Viljoen (Chairman), Dr P.J. du Toit. Standing (left to right): Dr H.H. Curson, Mr A.C. Kirkpatrick, Mr J. Tromp (Registrar).

**FIGURE 1:** First South African Veterinary Board, 1933.

## The South African Veterinary Council in action

Since 1992, South Africa has undergone unprecedented change with the advent of a multi-racial democracy and a new democratic Constitution. In addition there have been numerous changes within the veterinary profession globally, such as increasing specialisation. The primary responsibility for harnessing the opportunities offered by the transition from the old to the new dispensation lay with the following Presidents of the SAVC.

### Professor Barend Cornelis Jansen (President of Council: 28 March 1983 – 28 March 1986)

Professor Jansen had served on the Veterinary Board, the predecessor of the Veterinary Council, since 1961 and was also the last chairperson of the Board (Kruger 2010), which ceased to exist in 1982.

The newly established SAVC consisted of ten members, six elected and four statutory appointments, the latter representing the Veterinary Faculty, the Minister of Agriculture and the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA), as well as a legal representative (Republic of South Africa 1982). Administration was provided by the Northern Transvaal Chamber of Commerce, with offices in the Pretoria Show Grounds, and Mr G.R. Toerien serving as Registrar.

Professor Jansen was a prominent academic and intellectually impressive and formidable in arguments, most of which he

won convincingly (P.C. Ardington personal anecdotes, 1983–1986). When chairing Council meetings, however, he had to contend with a more representative body and more dissenting debate than previously. An Educational Committee of Council was immediately established to monitor education and provide for verification of qualifications, Council examinations and registration of veterinarians wishing to practice in South Africa.

A feature of the new order was an increase in complaints intra-professionally and by clients against veterinarians. Increasing urban practice, awareness of a more representative, accessible Council and greater awareness of legal rights were some of the reasons for this. In response, a Disciplinary Committee was established in 1985 to gather evidence in support of complaints, to hold hearings and submit their decisions to the Council for ratification (Toerien & Moorcroft 1985a).

Relationships between statutory professional bodies and the professionals who pay fees to be regulated by them are not always smooth. In 1985, it was reported at an SAVC meeting, in reference to etorphine hydrochloride, 'The Wildlife Group of the Veterinary Association should indicate to all veterinarians that if they prescribe this medicine, the animals concerned should be under their personal control' (Toerien & Moorcroft 1985b:14). The issue has remained topical through to 2011, with veterinary involvement in rhinoceros poaching using game capture drugs.

Criticism of the SAVC appeared in the minutes of a meeting in 1985 when it was noted that, 'at recent meetings of SAVA branches severe criticism was expressed that the Council was sitting in an ivory tower and imposing their views on the profession as a whole' (Toerien & Moorcroft 1985b:12).

To quote the Registrar, Ms Hanri Kruger, 29 years later: 'The more things change the more they stay the same' (Alphonse Karr 1849).

### Dr George Edwin Frost (President of Council: 14 April 1986 – 31 March 1992)

Dr Frost was elected the second President of the SAVC and the Council placed their confidence in him for two terms. He practiced in a well-equipped mixed private practice and was a specialist surgeon. This was fortunate because issues such as specialisation and registration of specialists, merchandising, advertising and a more litigious society were becoming prominent. Some veterinarians were of the opinion that they were not being given fair hearings during SAVC disciplinary hearings. The Veterinary Defence Association, whose brief was to assist veterinarians who had had professional conduct complaints lodged against them, repeatedly and sometimes unjustifiably criticised Dr Frost and the SAVC. It made for a persistently poor relationship. However, it did serve to sensitise the Council to amending the process of investigating complaints. The Disciplinary Committee was replaced by an Investigation Committee which undertook investigations to determine the merits of complaints. Hearings reverted to being heard by the SAVC (Singh 2011).

In response to the criticisms of 1985, and with a need for better communication, the first Newsletter was circulated to the profession on photocopied A4 pages in August 1986 and has continued since with greater regularity, culminating in the comprehensive Newsletter issued currently.

Representatives from two para-veterinary professions, Nursing and Technology, were included from the start of Dr Frost's second term (01 April 1989) (Singh 2011). Sister D. du Toit had the honour of being the first woman to serve on the SAVC.

### **Professor Rhoderick Ian Coubrough (President of Council: 07 April 1992 – 21 March 1994)**

The appointment of Prof. Coubrough had the SAVC reverting to academia for its President. The first task was to address administrative and financial problems that had been escalating for some time. Consensus was that the administration should be undertaken on a full-time basis, with separate, dedicated office space, telephones, equipment et cetera. The legal firm, Mendel Cohen and Partners Inc., represented by the division Veterinary Management Services cc, was appointed, with Ms Hanri Kruger, a Director of the firm, as Registrar and Ms Lynette Havinga as assistant Registrar (Moorcroft 1993).

Conveniently, the SAVC gained the legal services of Ms Kruger, *inter alia* acting as *pro forma* complainant in disciplinary matters (Singh 2011). Offices were located in the SA Perm Building, corner of Pretorius and Paul Kruger Streets. Reservations about handing over such responsibilities to two young women proved to be totally unfounded. The confidence of the SAVC was well justified. It enjoyed an immediate, sustained transformation in efficiency, redress of backlogs, financial controls, organised filing and positive attitudes (H.M. Terblanche pers. comm., 16 May 2011).

Other issues of importance included maintaining reciprocity arrangements with registering authorities in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, investigation of veterinary education, changing status of veterinary advertising and commitment to better communication with the professions. The Newsletter was accordingly published biannually from 1993.

Prof. Coubrough resigned as President after 2 years because of his workload as Dean of the Veterinary Faculty at Onderstepoort.

### **Dr Peter Christopher Ardington (President of Council: 21 March 1994 – 31 March 1998)**

Dr Ardington farms and practices in rural mixed practice. After democratic elections in April 1994 new realities appeared. The SAVC was all white and almost all male. Expectations of redress in the form of affirmative action were great, especially in statutory organisations, such as the SAVC, which were answerable to the African National Congress Government. Approximately 5% of veterinarians

were black, a small pool from which to draw leadership. In addition, their main profile was young and inexperienced. The SAVC co-opted three suitable black veterinarians as an interim measure prior to reconstruction (Havinga 1995). They were Drs S.T. Cornelius, A.M. Karodia and W. Rabalao. A black woman, Dr M.E. Mogajane, served as the Minister of Agriculture's representative (Kruger & Havinga 1995a). It was unsatisfactory that co-opted members had no voting rights, so decisions were made by consensus as often as possible.

Language was a sensitive issue. The generosity and grace of Afrikaans-speaking members allowed a harmonious transition from a historically bilingual arrangement to English. Other issues included improvements to protocols followed during disciplinary hearings (Kruger & Havinga 1996a), registration and recognition of specialists (Kruger & Havinga 1998a), the incorporation of laboratory animal technologists as a para-veterinary profession (Kruger & Havinga 1998b), the policy on animal experimentation (Kruger & Havinga 1997a) and the ethics of pecuniary interests in veterinary supply firms (Kruger & Havinga 1996b). The SAVC supported the inclusion of an apology and redress of past discrimination against veterinarians under apartheid, written by the President, in the Newsletter (Kruger & Havinga 1997b).

A restructuring workshop was held in Pretoria on 24 July 1995 (Kruger & Havinga 1995b). All interested and affected parties were invited. The SAVC invited opinion for noting and debate. The Council cooperated with Minister D. Hanekom, who attended the workshop, and subsequently with Minister Thoko Didiza. The SAVC's draft for submission to Parliament was circulated via the Newsletter (Kruger & Havinga 1995b).

The SAVC relocated, along with Ms Kruger's firm, to Hamilton Forum, Hamilton Street, Pretoria on 01 September 1996.

### **Professor Hercules Morkel Terblanche (President of Council: 31 March 1998 – 31 March 2004)**

Professor Terblanche was Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science at Medunsa and served two terms as President. As the first President with superior computer literacy, he wrote the programme that served as the first database for registered professionals.

Professor S. Van den Berg and fellow subcommittee members finalised the comprehensive Code of Conduct and Practice for Veterinarians in December 1998 (Kruger & Havinga 1998b). It provided expectations of conduct by the SAVC of veterinarians in a wide variety of situations. Other noteworthy issues concerned functions which could be performed by the para-veterinary professions, defining perverse incentives (Kruger & Havinga 1999), conducting visits to SAVA branches to improve communication and derive feedback (Kruger & Havinga 2000), circulating information leaflets with the Newsletter on issues of diagnostic (Kruger & Havinga 2000) and therapeutic importance (Kruger & Havinga 2000, 2001a),

minimum requirements for veterinary facilities, after hours emergency service requirements (Kruger & Havinga 2001a) and minimum standards for clinical examination and record keeping (Kruger & Havinga 2001a).

Restructuring of the SAVC suffered delays, partly bureaucratic, partly resulting from other amendments being added to the Act. In October 2001, the SAVC motivated the restructuring of the Council at a meeting of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Agriculture and Land Affairs (Kruger & Havinga 2001b). The *Veterinary and Para-Veterinary Professions Amendment Act 2002* (Act No. 10 of 2002) was finally gazetted on 13 February 2002 (Republic of South Africa 2002). There was insufficient time to complete all election and selection procedures stipulated by the Amendment Act, so an interim election was held. This arrangement lasted 4 months.

### **Professor Sybrand Smit van den Berg (President of Council: 01 April 2004 – 30 July 2007)**

After long service on the SAVC, Investigation Committee, Code of Conduct and Practice Subcommittee and in determining minimum standards for facilities, Prof. van den Berg was President for 4 months, followed by a 3-year term under the amended Act. He faced a larger, more diverse and more representative Council of 19 members, which included a lay person representing consumers of veterinary services (Kruger & Havinga 2001b). The Minister of Agriculture, Ms Thoko Didiza, addressed the Council on 18 October 2004. During a positive meeting, she invited the Council to engage with her several times annually, consult widely and advise the Ministry (Kruger & Havinga 2004).

After prolonged deliberations, the SAVC agreed on a protocol for continuing professional development with a system of registering points with Council on a 3-year cycle (Havinga 2004). After sustained communication with the veterinary profession, it was decided to implement this protocol on 01 April 2006 (Havinga 2005).

The SAVC advised professionals on a wide range of issues such as conditions of employment and HIV and AIDS in the workplace. Other issues addressed included the banning of tail docking (Kruger & Havinga 2005), repacking and dispensing of medicines and a revised and an updated Code of Conduct and Practice (Kruger & Havinga 2005).

A 'visitation' to the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria was performed on behalf of the SAVC from 22 May to 26 May 2006 (Kruger & Havinga 2006). Dr Peter Ardington led the team, which included representatives of the statutory bodies of the United Kingdom, Australia and Tanzania. The final report approved the degrees awarded. Some deficiencies of staffing, administrative structures, educational methodology, facilities and equipment were reported (Havinga 2007). It was a comprehensive and expensive but overdue and necessary exercise. SAVC staff, particularly Ms Lynette Havinga, provided exemplary

organisation and support from inception to completion of the report.

### **Dr Rebone Moerane (President of Council: 06 August 2007 – 31 July 2013)**

Dr Rebone Moerane's background is mainly in state veterinary medicine and education in primary animal health and its significance for household food security. His current focus is poverty alleviation (Kruger & Havinga 2007). He was the first black President of the SAVC. Major initiatives of his have been skills development of the SAVC staff, ensuring that personnel matters are in order and salaries are market related. The SAVC re-elected him to a second term in 2010 (Kruger & Havinga 2010).

On 01 February 2008, the SAVC relocated to an adapted house at 874 Church Street, Lisdogan Park, Pretoria, finding a permanent, comfortable home after 26 years. Ms R. Pienaar was appointed as Registrar when Ms Kruger left in January 2011 and served until 15 July 2011, to be replaced by Ms L. Havinga as Acting Registrar.

The SAVC has been served by presidents, members and staff of praiseworthy dedication and integrity for 29 years. South Africa was fortunate to have Nelson Mandela as its first black President. The veterinary profession is likewise fortunate to have had Rebone Moerane as the SAVC's first black President.

## **Recognition**

This brief account of the history of the Veterinary Council would be incomplete without special mention of its senior staff, Registrar Hanri Kruger and Administrator Lynette Havinga, under the last five presidents. Dr Rebone Moerane, in his speech at the 2010 farewell function for Hanri Kruger, mentioned, amongst other compliments, her outstanding talent for change management (R.M. Moerane pers. comm., 08 February 2010). How fortunate the profession was to have had such a person through a time of such massive global and national change. Rarely does the SAVA award special citations to individuals for praiseworthy contributions to the veterinary profession, but citations were awarded to Hanri Kruger and Lynette Havinga at SAVA awards ceremonies in 2005 and 2008, respectively. They were in recognition of their long terms of service to the profession with great loyalty and dedication.

## **Conclusion**

The evolution of the South African Veterinary Board and of its successor, the SAVC, provides a historical perspective of socio-political interest in a uniquely South African context. Three issues are noteworthy. The increasing recognition of the role of the veterinary profession and its necessary support legislation and administration is emphasised. Secondly, the greater emancipation, and subsequent involvement, of women in society and in the veterinary and para-veterinary professions is prominent. Thirdly, the full democratic rights



Source: Photo provided by Ms. Lynette Havinga, SA Veterinary Council

Front row (left to right): Prof. Lucky Nedambale, Dr Joseph van Heerden, Dr Anne De Vos (Vice-president), Dr Rebone Moerane (President), Dr Clive Marwick (Member of Executive Committee). Second row (left to right): Dr Danie Odendaal, Dr Steven Cornelius, Dr Glen Carlisle, Ms Nafeesa Kadwa, Sr Theresa Lotter, Dr Ayoub Banderker. Third row (left to right): Mr Hiram Arendse, Dr Brigitte Wenhold, Dr Quixi Sonntag, Dr Jana Pretorius, Ms R. Pienaar (Registrar: January – 15 July 2011), Dr Boitshoko Ntshabele. Fourth row (left to right): Mr Johan Oosthuizen, Dr John Adam. Absent: Mr Johann Muller.

**FIGURE 2:** South African Veterinary Council, 2011.

of black people in the South African democracy and their involvement in the profession is an outstanding change since 1994. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in comparing photographs of the 1933 Veterinary Board (Figure 1) and the 2011 Veterinary Council (Figure 2).

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### Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships which may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

P.C.A. (Private Veterinarian) was the primary author of the original presentation and R.D.B. (Brooklyn) contributed valuable advice, text, referencing and editing for this published format.

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