

The Onderstepoort FEEDLOT CHALLENGE:

A Student Perspective

Preparing Future Veterinarians through Practical Learning

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The Society proudly supported the fifth-year veterinary students by sponsoring shirts for their participation in the Feedlot Challenge, an initiative that provides valuable practical experience in feedlot management.

The Onderstepoort Feedlot Challenge (OPFLC) is a hands-on action learning project that all the fifth-year Bachelor of Veterinary Science (BVSc) students partake in at the veterinary facility of the University of Pretoria. The OPFLC forms part of the module Ruminant Production Medicine, which focuses on theoretical training in herd/flock health, as well as ensuring optimal production. Throughout the OPFLC we have multiple group presentations where we present what we have learned as well as the mistakes we have made and how to improve them, to the lectures, we then receive marks based on this. These assessments are a substantial portion of the total assessments we need to complete for the module.

At the beginning of the year, we are divided into 8 teams of 23 students, each team then needs to choose a group name and a group leader. Once that has been established, each person in the group is





assigned a specific role in the feedlot, such as kraal management, animal welfare or marketing of the group. It is that person's responsibility to manage everything that falls under their portfolio. Once all the group administrative matters have been completed, the teams are given the chance to acquire a pen of 14 cattle that have been placed together beforehand. This is done through a tender process. All 8 pens have different production potentials and thus makes it a strategic process of balancing what you pay vs what you get to ensure maximum profit at the end. Once each group has acquired a pen of 14 cattle, they are the group's complete responsibility for the next 105 days until they are sent to the abattoir for slaughter. The responsibilities include processing them, formulating different rations throughout the 105 days to ensure maximum growth through the different life stages, and mixing the rations that are formulated. It is also the group's responsibility to manage their own

finances as well as closely monitor the physical and mental health of their cattle at all times to ensure adequate animal welfare and maximum growth during the 105 days. If a sick animal is identified, that animal has to be pulled from the pen and treated under the supervision of Prof. Andy Hentzen, the coordinator of the OPFLC.

To date, our team has made amazing progress! We have a very good group dynamic, and every member of our team is extremely passionate about the OPFLC, constantly giving their all. Our cattle are healthy, happy, and gaining kilograms every day. We did have to pull two cattle to date from our pen, but both have successfully been treated and are happy and healthy.

We, as Beefana Beefana, are extremely excited to see what the final weight of our cattle will be on slaughter day, but at this point, we are happy with their progress and believe that from here on, it will be better every day!