Students rank Faculty as one of the best

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- **2005 SREQ results** for our postgraduate students were outstanding, and the Faculty ranked first across the University in Generic Skills, Research Climate and Quality of Infrastructure, and second in Overall Satisfaction. Thanks to the hard work over the past three years of all staff involved in postgraduate education, all categories assessed showed dramatic improvement since 2002 and put us in top position in the College of Sciences and Technology.

- **The SCEO results** for the Masters in Public Health (Veterinary Public Health Management postgraduate degree) were also excellent, with scores for Good Teaching, Appropriate Assessment, Generic Skills and Learning Community well above University average. The Overall Satisfaction was 96% with 100% satisfaction with the Faculty student administration. These excellent results were the highest of any Faculty across the University and are testament to the dedication of our teaching and administrative staff.

While we are endeavouring to graduate veterinarians with the best possible attributes for a smooth transition to practice, or the capabilities to move into research and other fields of veterinary science, we also recognise the enormous role played by our Partners in Veterinary Education - the Partner Practitioners who take our students for their final year rotations and electives.

Visiting these veterinarians is one of our priorities and, with Faculty staff involved in the program, I have recently had the pleasure of meeting practitioners from the Shoalhaven and Canberra. I was very impressed by all those I met, the friendly clinical atmospheres and excellent facilities, and by the generous support given to our student interns.

Another important part of the program is the opportunity to invite practitioners to the Faculty for our annual Partners in Veterinary Education Conference. This year the conference will be held on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 July, and Provost have again generously agreed to be the major sponsor of the event. The 2006 presentations will showcase Faculty staff knowledge and research, and we will also include interactive and breakout sessions as in previous years to enable practitioners to provide input. I am confident it will be another very successful meeting and we warmly invite all our Partner Practitioners to attend.

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All images by Kristen Clarke unless otherwise noted.

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In early 2006, the genetic code of marsupials was documented for the first time. The chosen genome was that of the South American marsupial Monodelphis domestica, the grey short tailed opossum, and sequencing was undertaken at the Broad Institute in the US. This world first research could ultimately reveal unparalleled insights into mammalian evolution.

Leading an international research team in the analysis of the marsupial immune genes (that is, immune genes within any one genome) is Faculty of Veterinary Science Postdoctoral Fellow Dr Kathy Belov. In January 2006 Kathy’s team published the first paper, in the highly regarded journal PLoS Biology, describing the analysis of a portion of this genome and an important cluster of immune genes known as the MHC.

The opossum research involved international collaboration between the Faculty of Veterinary Science, the Australian National University, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the University of New Mexico, Texas A&M, the University of Pittsburg, and the Southwest Foundation for Biomedical Research.

These newly discovered genes sequence points towards the existence of an ancestral “immune supercomplex” which contains various immune genes in a single region of the genome. As Dr Belov says, “Mapping the opossum MHC allowed us to deduce what the MHC of ancestral mammals looked like. We think it contained several different types of immune genes in a single complex. These genes are no longer found in a single complex in any living animal but are scattered over various chromosomes”.

Dr Belov and her laboratory, the Australasian Wildlife Genomics Group, are using genetic data from marsupials and monotremes to understand how our own intricate immune system evolved from the relatively simple one of lower vertebrates such as birds and fish. In collaboration with renowned scientist Dr Stephan Becker of the Sanger Centre in the UK, and Dr Mark Eldridge from Macquarie University, Dr Belov recently won a prestigious ARC Discovery grant to fully characterise the MHC of the Tamarra wallaby. Kathy’s PhD students, Hannah Siddle and Claire Sanderson, are an integral part of this cutting edge team.

The Tamarra wallaby project is Australia’s first large-scale genome project and sequencing is being carried out at the Australian Genome Research Facility in Australia and the Baylor Centre in the US. The group is also working closely with Drs Janine Drakin and Jenny Graves of the ANU-based ARC Centre for Kangaroo Genomics, analysing the Tamarra wallaby genome sequence as it becomes available.

Now, Kathy and her collaborators are cracking the genetic code of the platypus. The platypus genome is being sequenced at Washington University in the US and the Australasian Wildlife Genetics Group is focusing on understanding both the immune and venom genes of these enigmatic creatures.

In May 2006, Kathy departs on a T Robinson travelling fellowship to meet with researchers at Washington University working on the platypus genome, and the Broad Institute involved with the opossum genome. Following her breakthrough research, Kathy is in demand as a speaker and will present new data in Cold Spring Harbour at the Biology of Genomes meeting, and in Cambridge University in the UK. As she says, “This is an incredibly exciting time for me and the Faculty to be involved with genetics, and it’s particularly special to be able to use Australia’s unique fauna to unravels clues about the evolution of our own immune systems”.

BOOSTING BIOSECURITY

Leading scientists in the fields of animal and plant biosecurity have joined forces to boost protection measures through a new alliance between the NSW Government’s Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute (EMAI), and the University of Sydney’s Faculty of Veterinary Science Camden campus and Plant Breeding Institute at Cobbitty.

The NSW Centre for Animal and Plant Biosecurity, announced on 24 March by the Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald, will lead to 400 veterinary and agriculture researchers developing and applying new technologies for diagnosis, surveillance, prevention and control of serious pests and diseases that could threaten Australia’s agricultural industries.

The new Centre will work across the three facilities in Camden and Cobbitty linked by high-speed broadband to the Greater Sydney IT network, ensuring speedy access to the specialised supercomputing, genomics and proteomics services critical to advanced biotechnology.

Key research areas for the Centre include research and rapid diagnosis technologies for diseases such as Avian Influenza, West Nile Virus, and Newcastle Disease; projects on food-borne pathogens such as E. coli and Salmonella; the development of new vaccines and diagnostic tools to help control viral diseases in pigs and other livestock; further research into QX disease in Sydney rock oysters and Nodavirus in Australian Bass and Barramundi; and research to help minimise incursions of exotic pests and diseases in horticulture and cereal crops, such as fire blight in apples and pears, the papaya fruit fly, citrus canker, black Sigatoka in bananas and wheat rust.

THE WARATWA ALLIANCE

The Waratwa National Cat Alliance first came to the attention of the Faculty of Veterinary Science when its volunteer team staged an unforgettable cat show as part of our October 2005 Cats on Campus event. The Waratah is of particular importance to the Faculty as are the owners of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, the second most common breed suffering from these potentially fatal problems.

Please contact the Veterinary Science Foundation if you are interested in sponsoring the work of the Foundation and Faculty: vsf@vetsci.usyd.edu.au or (02) 9351 8026.

OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

Mr Colin Dunlop of Advanced Anaesthesia Supplies has again assisted the Faculty by partially donating pulsoximeters for the University Veterinary Centre at Sydney (UVCS).

Individual donors are some of our most generous supporters and the UVCS has become the recipient of funding that will support important research into canine brachycephalic airway disease (long soft palate and laryngeal disease). The funding was provided by the owners of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, the second most common breed suffering from these potentially fatal problems.

Please contact the Veterinary Science Foundation if you are interested in sponsoring the work of the Foundation and Faculty: vsf@vetsci.usyd.edu.au or (02) 9351 8026.
SUSTAINING PIG PRODUCTION IN VIETNAM

Dr Trish Holyoake is the Faculty's Senior Lecturer in Intensive Animal Industries and its key pig specialist. Trish's expertise is currently assisting small holder pig farmers in Vietnam to develop more sustainable farming and production methods. Trish is undertaking the project in collaboration with Drs Darren Trott and Ian Wilkie from the University of Queensland, Dr Colin Cargill from the University of Adelaide, Dr Tony Faly from the Victorian Department of Primary Industries and the following Vietnamese organisations: National Institutions of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Research at Hanoi, Faculty of Animal Sciences at Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry, Department of Agricultural and Rural Development of Quang Tri Province and the Hue Vietnamese Farmer Association Thua Thien.

More than 80% of Vietnamese obtain their livelihood from the land. Pig meat, both nutritionally and culturally, is the most important protein source in the Vietnamese diet, accounting for about 70% of total meat consumed. Not surprisingly, Vietnam is currently the 8th largest producer of pigs in the world.

In Central Vietnam, small holder farmers predominantly raise pig breeds such as Mong Cai, Mini pig, and SocHighland. These breeds are well adapted to local conditions, but have limited performance and economic efficiency.

This project aims to improve the genetics of local breeds by introducing high performance Mong Cai lines for pure breeding and through exotic breeding programs. By aligning these breeding programs with an integrated farrow-to-finish management plan (focusing on health, husbandry, housing and nutrition) that will improve production parameters and limit health problems, the project will provide significant benefits for small holder farmers.

Through a "train the trainers approach", this holistic, continuous improvement plan will ultimately reach veterinary extension workers, commercial piggy managers and selected small scale pig farmers to ensure a successful uptake of knowledge and skills.

Because genotyping an animal – in this case crocodiles - can be achieved almost from the day of hatching, the selection of animals based on genotype (as opposed to phenotype, or observed physical characteristics) has several advantages. For example alleles for economically important traits can be introduced into a commercial population from exotic stock using marker-assisted introgression or repeated backcrossing, selection accuracy can be improved by identifying markers linked to QTL and incorporating this information into the estimation of breeding values; and selection intensity may be increased.

More specifically the project aims to deliver the first high resolution genetic marker map for the saltwater crocodile. It will also produce chromosome and map locations for QTL of economic importance, provide the ability to more accurately estimate crocodile breeding values and critically, to decrease the generation interval, currently estimated to be 13 years.

Lee is collaborating with Dr Travis Glenn of the Savannah River Ecology Laboratory at the University of Georgia, South Carolina, USA, an expert in the application of molecular genetics in reptiles. In late 2005, he worked for several months in Dr Glenn’s laboratory developing a large number of DNA fingerprint genetic markers necessary for making the genetic maps. In conjunction with Dr Glenn, Lee has also developed resources for anchoring the linkage maps onto specific chromosomes using fluorescent in situ hybridisation.

During his visit, Lee participated in Dr Glenn’s work on the American Alligator (Alligator mississippiensis), part of an ongoing genetic population study aimed at solving problems contributing to the decline and extinction of small native animal populations.

By increasing the accuracy of estimating breeding values for the selection of breeding animals, Lee’s research in Australia will enable producers to select future breeding crocodiles based on the animal’s genotype (in addition to phenotypic observations made on the individual and its relatives) and, by decreasing the generation interval, enable faster genetic improvement across the industry.

Lee’s research will also provide an important store of knowledge and resources for future conservation work on C. porosus and other species of crocodile.
**ADAPTING AUSTRALIAN CATTLE FOR CHINA**

A Faculty team led by Associate Professor Peter Wynn has won a major tender from the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to help the Chinese dairying regions in China, the development of dairy industry improve productivity of Australian Holstein-Friesian dairy cows imported into China. Other team members are the Faculty's Director of Bovine Clinical Practice Associate Professor John House and Associate Lecturer in Animal Nutrition Dr Russell Bush, Dr Kun Zhu, Research Officer in the Department of Endocrinology and Diabetes at St Charles Guideron Hospital, Western Australia, and leading Dairy Nutrition Consultant Dr Bruce Hamilton.

The project aims to improve the animal welfare and husbandry capacities of Chinese dairy livestock managers with a particular focus on nutrition and feeding regimes. Funded through the International Agricultural Cooperation Live Animal Trade, it includes assessment of dairy farms in three or four key dairying regions in China, the development of educational material, and delivery of training workshops. Over the past 3 years China has emerged as the largest market for Australian live dairy cattle - since 2005, China has received about 125,000 cattle valued at A$222 million or 75% of total dairy cattle exports, figures in line with the increased demand for fresh dairy products in the Chinese community. Following concerns of the Chinese Ministry of Agriculture regarding the quality and post-arrival performance of dairy cattle imported for breeding purposes, the two countries agreed on a strategy whereby Australian heifers would be subjected to tougher protocols before being accepted and, at the same time, Australia would provide a program of technical assistance to improve animal welfare outcomes for the exported heifers.

Key issues to be investigated in China include cow nutrition, both pasture-based and concentrates, and cow health. Diseases common to dairy cows worldwide also exist in Chinese herds, and susceptibility to these can be exacerbated by major changes in nutritional status and climatic conditions – for example, subjecting Australian heifers to the unfamiliar harsh winter conditions of Northern China. Housing of the exported heifers on farm would be investigated to ensure it maximises cow comfort by decreasing exposure to climatic extremes and minimises the exposure of animals to potential pathogens. Associate Professor Wynn has had significant experience working in China and other parts of Asia, and he believes this mission will be most important in consolidating Australia’s burgeoning live dairy cattle export industry to China. As he says, “The Faculty of Veterinary Science is well placed to assist with this important project through our major contribution to the genetic selection programs being developed by the Cooperative Research Centre for Innovative Dairy Products”.

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**CAT FLEAS**

**MORE THAN MERELY IRRITATION**

The entire annual animal medicine lecture at the University Veterinary Centre Sydney is contributed to this project by the right postgraduate veterinary interns Dr Tus Night, Lucy Dennis and Amy Kiss. Senior Lecturer Dr Julia Brady, Senior Medical Officer Dr Car儘 Fee and Associate Professor Dr Kristyn琤 Hodgson are involved in the project. Senior Lecturer and project leader Dr Yvonne Bars, and Fellow Medical Resident Dr Beccy Price are adjunct in Melbourne. Professor Lappin from Queensland State University in the USA is collaborating with the Faculty team on the cat flea project. Feline medicine specialist and Senior Lecturer in Small Animal Medicine Dr Vanessa Bars, together with Professor Michael Lappin of Colorado State University in the USA, is leading an Australian research project designed to investigate the prevalence of haemoparasites in Australian cats and their fleas. Professor Lappin is one of the world’s foremost feline infectious disease experts.

The common cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis*, doesn’t just cause allergic skin problems. It is known to harbor a surprising number of blood-borne infectious agents, some of which it transfers between cats, and some of which – for example, *Bartonella* species - may transfer between cats and people. In one of the few very studies completed in the United States, DNA of the haemoplasmas or *Bartonella* species were amplified from 60.8% and 65.2% of cats and their fleas, respectively, demonstrating that both feline and human pathogens are common in fleas and cats. The Australian project involves the collection and storage of fleas taken from cats by veterinarians in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, and the collection of a small amount of blood from the host pets. DNA will be amplified from the blood and genome of the cat, and their fleas, to identify specific infectious agents including *Bartonella*, *Ehrlichia*, *Anaplasma*, *Neorickettsia*, *Mycoplasma* and *Rickettsia*.

Based on the US study results, it is expected that approximately 75% of Australian cats and their fleas tested will be positive for DNA of one or more of the relevant infectious agents.

Flea infestation is common in the cats of Australia but public awareness of the diseases fleas can carry is low. Estimating the prevalence rates of these potential pathogens is an important step in educating pet owners, including understanding about the need for flea control and its associated costs.

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**SKIN FLEAS**

**MORE THAN MERELY IRRITATION**

Senior Lecturer in Anatomy Dr Glenn Shea is one of Australia’s most renowned herpetologists and the world’s foremost expert on bluetongue lizards. In addition to his busy teaching and research supervisory roles, Glenn is an Honorary Research Associate of the Australian Museum with extensive biological fieldwork experience surveying and collecting reptiles and amphibians throughout Australia, and in New Guinea, Fiji and New Caledonia. In collaboration with Dr Allen Greer of the Australian Museum, Glenn has been researching the systematics of a large genus of skinks, *Sphenomorphus*, from New Guinea and the Solomon Islands since 1997. Although there are already over 40 named species from the region, many are unnamed and the named species often poorly defined.

Due to the perceived complexity of the taxonomy problems involved, there has been no revision of the genus since 1915. This hasn’t prevented the accumulation in museum collections worldwide, over the past half-century, of over 10,000 specimens of this genus and, in the past decade, additional collections in remote and poorly-studied areas of New Guinea by research teams from the South Australian Museum and the Bishop Museum in Honolulu. These collections have facilitated studies of patterns of geographic variation of these skinks throughout New Guinea.

Glenn’s research has taken him to New Guinea skink collections across the USA and Europe. He worked with the Bishop Museum team in the Milne Bay Province in New Guinea, collecting more skink samples from the Louisiade Archipelago, a remote chain of islands last visited by herpetologists in the 1950s. A 1994 expedition to Sudest and Rossel islands, at the eastern end of the chain, discovered an estimated 30-plus new species of lizards, snakes and frogs.

In addition to defining the diversity of species in *Sphenomorphus*, which promises to be the most biodiverse lizard genus in New Guinea, Glenn’s work is contributing to a study by Bishop Museum researchers on vertebrate biodiversity “hotspots” and the distribution of collecting effort in New Guinea. This will be a first step in developing a strategic plan for future biological research work and conservation management for the island.

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**HORSES GET BAD BACKS TOO**

Horses are common seen in race horses in Hong Kong, the city has become the location for the most biodiverse lizard genus in New Guinea, Glenn’s work is contributing to a study by Bishop Museum researchers on vertebrate biodiversity “hotspots” and the distribution of collecting effort in New Guinea. This will be a first step in developing a strategic plan for future biological research work and conservation management for the island.

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**JSF ROUNDHOUSE November 2005**

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**KRISTEN CLARKE**

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**Associate Professor Peter Wynn and Dr Russell Bush are working with the Chinese dairying industry to improve productivity of Australian dairy cows after importation into China.**
ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

An increasing demand by artificial breeding companies for veterinary graduates with specialist knowledge has led to an elective Year 5 unit of study created to train students for work in artificial breeding industries and/or mixed practice with a significant amount of breeding work. It also aims to foster an interest in research.

Advanced Reproductive Technologies (ART) integrates the disciplines of quantitative and molecular genetics, animal health, nutrition, and reproduction, including advanced reproductive technologies as applied to managed breeding and assisted reproduction programs.

Participating students gain practical skills in artificial insemination, embryo transfer, gamete preservation and banking, pregnancy diagnosis, molecular genetics (proof of parentage, marker assisted selection), selection of breeding stock, and management of breeding programs.

Proficiency is developed in legal, ethical, and animal welfare aspects of artificial breeding program management.

While the major species of practical focus are sheep and cattle, students complete the course with knowledge of species such as pigs, companion animals, and wildlife.

Head of the Unit of Study and Associate Dean for Research Professor Gareth Evans says, “The elective is proving to be a great success, with 12 to 15 students each year benefiting from small group teaching, the combination of practical and theoretical experience and theory, and the greater depth of specialist knowledge the unit delivers”.

Two companies play an important and generous role in facilitating ART: Biosnipe (Australia) and Pry Ltd supplies hormones and other materials for the course, and Dr Shane Ashworth of Total Livestock Genetics volunteers his tuition services each year and accommodates students in extramural rotations.

NEW UVCS STAFF

Dr Aitor Arteaga (right) has joined the University Veterinary Centre Sydney (UVCS) as Senior Registrar in Small Animal Medicine. His special field of research interest is hyperadrenocorticism and the acute phase response of inflammation in dogs.

A 1997 veterinary graduate from Zaragoza University in Spain, Aitor gained a Certificate in Small Animal Medicine from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), London, in 2004. Following graduation, he spent time in private practice in Spain and the United Kingdom, including a specialist referral practice where he completed an internship under the supervision of RCVS and European-recognised veterinary specialists.

Between 2002 and 2006, Aitor undertook the role of Hill’s Senior Clinical Training Scholar (Resident) in Small Animal Medicine at the University of Glasgow Veterinary School in Scotland. He brings to the Faculty experience with the supervision and clinical instruction of undergraduate students at the referral Hospital of Glasgow Veterinary School, including final year veterinary students on rotation through the Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) charity clinic in central Glasgow.

Aitor says he made the move to Sydney as he wants to be part of what he sees as the UVCS developing into a world-class research environment.

VET STUDENT’S HISTORIC WINTER OLYMPICS

Year 5 veterinary student Astrid Loch-Wilkinson made history as the pilot of Australia’s first women’s bobsleigh team to qualify for a Winter Olympic Games. Astrid and team mate Kylie Reed finished 14 out of 15 of the world’s top bobsleigh teams at the February 2006 Winter Olympic Games in Torino, Italy. They largely financed their own Games bid and competed against northern hemisphere teams with million-dollar budgets.

MEAT JUDGING STUDENTS COMPETE IN US

Fiona Sparke, Year 4 Bachelor of Animal and Veterinary Bioscience (since graduated), was one of six Australian students to qualify for the 16th Annual Intercollegiate Meat Judging scholarship tour of the USA in January 2006. Sponsored by Meat and Livestock Australia, the initial 70 competing students assessed beef, lamb and pork carcasses according to cut and quality. The scholarship tour provides an understanding of the USDA grading system and processing regimes with further competition held against US students at the National Western Stock Show in Denver.

CORNELL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Three final year students will attend the prestigious Cornell Leadership Program for Veterinary Students in 2006: Bronwyn Clayton, Louise Fitzgerald and Lynda Shaw. This makes a total of 49 Sydney students who have won places in the program since the first group was accepted in 1992 – one of the highest acceptance rates of any veterinary school worldwide.
**FACULTY STAFF NEWS**

**LEARNING TO HANDLE LARGE ANIMALS**

The ability to handle a wide range of animal species with confidence and safety is a key attribute of all veterinary graduates. It’s also a tough call for students who haven’t had the opportunity to become familiar with farm animals or horses.

The Faculty’s sheep and horse units, located on the Camden campus, are an integral part of practical teaching classes within the veterinary science and animal and veterinary bioscience degrees, and for agricultural students undertaking the animal husbandry stream. The units are part of a property running from the Nepean River to Cobbitty that was purchased by the University in the early 1980s.

The sheep unit, which now also includes alpacas, has several hundred sheep of diverse breeds including British, Merino and Dorper. The property is destocked and restocked according to need. Year 1 students undertake basic handling procedures (both with individual animals and a flock basis) such as drenching, lamb marking, shearing, throwing a fleece, and other basic animal husbandry.

**PUBLIC HEALTH A GROWING PRIORITY**

The already solid reputation of the Faculty’s Veterinary Public Health Management postgraduate degree (VPHMgt) received another major boost with the publication of the 2005 Student Research Experience Questionnaire (SREQ), University survey statistics that rank the student public health experience.

The results gave VPHMgt the highest scores, on all but one scale, in any Faculty across the University. Scores for Good Teaching, Appropriate Provision, General Skills and Learning Community well above University average, with Overall Satisfaction rated at 96% and a score of 100% for satisfaction with Faculty student administration.

The success of VPHMgt has led to the development of new linked postgraduate coursework programs. One of these, due to commence in 2007, is Veterinary Public Health (VPH), a fully online course co-taught with the School of Public Health. In addition, a new online program combining animal genetics and breeding with leadership and management is being modelled on VPHMgt and will share some units of study. A flexible program in Veterinary Studies will also enable students to select the units that will best suit their career goals.

More than sixty students are now enrolled in the VPHMgt course, which started in 2003 with eighteen, and fifteen have already graduated. Applications are now being accepted for the July 2006 intake.

**EILEEN AND POD A DEVOTED TEAM**

Camden campus technical officer Eileen Rathy is fast becoming a celebrity on the obedience dog circuit with her devoted three-legged (tripod) red kelpie “Showoffpod”. The team not only won a gold medal for Novice Dog at the 2005 NSW State Obedience Trials, Pod won a second gold for achieving the highest scores over two days.

Eileen, who works with senior veterinary students as part of her role, has been training dogs since the 1990s and was head trainer for nine years at the Wollondilly All Breeds Kennel Club. She says Pod has been her most successful dog to date, despite having his leg amputated at only two days of age after his mother’s licking created serious ulceration. Eileen and Pod’s efforts were rewarded in another sphere when Eileen received the 2006 Australia Day Wollondilly Senior Sportsperson of the Year award.

**UP STAFF PROFILE CRAIG KRISTO**

What are your qualifications and current position in the Faculty?

I have an Associate Diploma in Biology from the University of Central Queensland. I am a senior technical officer based at Camden in the J L Shute building and have now been with the Faculty for twenty-six years.

What does your role encompass?

I offer technical support for a number of veterinary practical classes and also field and laboratory support for a variety of research projects. In 2003, I was invited to assist in the coordination of a $1 million plus renovation to the Shute Building. This involved the relocation of all operations (teaching and research) from the building for the duration of the works, and made a challenging but satisfying project to undertake in my usual role.

How did your career begin?

I started as a field/labatory assistant on an industry-funded research project examining the efficacy of a number of prototype vaccines. This involved wide ranging field trials throughout NSW and Victoria as well as qualitative laboratory analysis of field isolates and assessment of vaccine responses.

Tell us about changes during your time at the University?

Apart from the advances in techniques and analytical equipment and the infrastructure upgrades, the most marked change has been the government’s continual reduction in funding for education. I was lucky enough to graduate from Central Queensland University in the 1970’s when tertiary education was fully funded. Since starting with this university I have seen the introduction of HECs as well as research and education funding being dramatically reduced. I fear that knowledge and the rate of scientific advances will pay the price.

What are your career highlights?

Easily the most rewarding experience in my time with the university was being part of the team led by Professor John Egerton, who was responsible for the control of footot in Nepal. For many years the virulent form of this disease ran essentially unchecked by conventional control methods in that country. John Egerton, a former Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, pioneered a nationwide vaccination program that utilised a vaccine that we produced using only the specific serotypes isolated from extensive field sampling from local Nepalese flocks. As a result of this work, footot in Nepal today is limited to only benign strains in very few areas.

What do you look forward to in the future?

The Camden campus is currently enjoying an upgrade in facilities. Later this year a new wildlife teaching facility and further teaching spaces will be completed. Immediately after this a new, larger lecture theatre will be built, which will together offer greater flexibility and the opportunity to improve the way we operate.

Who or what inspires you and why?

I count myself lucky to be able to work with many talented researchers, academics, students and support staff whose primary goal is to improve animal welfare in an increasingly profit driven world.
Dr Robert (Bob) Taylor
1917 – 2006

Described as a “giant of the profession”, Dr Bob Taylor died at age 88 on 6 March 2006. His dedication to veterinary science was formally recognised in 1969 with the NSW Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) Seddon Memorial Prize for meritorious clinical contribution to veterinary science and in 1994, with Life Fellowship of the AVA.

A New Zealander, Dr Taylor was accepted into the Faculty of Veterinary Science when his family moved to Sydney in 1935. Ignoring pleas by his father and Professor Gunn (you’ll fail and “go broke”) Bob followed his dream and in 1940 established clinical practice in the then, large country town of Wollongong, becoming the only private practitioner outside the metropolitan area between Sydney, Melbourne and west to Perth.

During his career Bob held teaching positions, was an examiner for the ACVS and contributed to numerous University and professional Committees, including as Deputy Chair of the Animal Care and Ethics Committee and the Post Graduate Foundation in Veterinary Science. He held roles in the NSW Board of Veterinary Surgeons and the Australian Veterinary Association.

Bob was invited back to the Faculty in 2001 after his first “retirement” to become Business Development Advisor and more recently he has been an integral contributor to the Partner Practice program. This latter role has seen Bob as one of the critical interfaces between the Faculty, students, and the profession, in particular with practitioners hosting final year rotations. Bob initiated and organised the now-annual Partner Practitioner Conference, and most recently he has undertaken an in-depth analysis of Faculty staffing.

Bob’s attention to detail, clinical acumen, work ethic and sage advice has been highly valued and we hope he will reflect with pride on his many achievements as he and Lorraine (finally) spend more leisure time at their Kiama beach retreat.

On behalf of the Faculty Bob, we’ll miss you.

Professor David Hodgson, Drs John Bageuley and Jennie Churchill