

VETERINARY HERITAGE

African Indigenous Knowledge (IK)

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African indigenous knowledge: dissemination of IK related information in the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute Library and the Jotello F. Soga Library, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria.

Abstract

In 2008 the South African government released an official policy on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). After years of Eurocentric approaches in veterinary research, indigenous knowledge was brought to the forefront after 1994. The paper starts with some definitions on the concept of IK. An overview follows on work done within the “*Animal Health for Developing Farmers*” research project at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute (OVI), that draws on indigenous knowledge. The OVI is a division of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) of South Africa.



The OVI Library had to position itself for service in this field. Aspects to consider were the collection of appropriate information (which was nearly non-existent) and cataloging and indexing of information (traditional print media and electronic media).

Since 2002, a group of historians from the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine, UK has been researching the history of veterinary medicine in South Africa. Their needs are discussed too.

The following types of information are described: information purposely written as IK, sources from which IK can be harvested, and the theory of IKS. The problem that much of the IKS literature is “grey” and therefore not easily available, is discussed.

The role played by the Jotello F. Soga Library of the Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria (UP) in locating, preserving and making accessible IK sources in the field of Ethnoveterinary Medicine is described. This includes the digitisation of rare slide items, creating web portals, and providing information support to researchers of the Phytomedicine Programme of the university. This programme is described as it plays an essential role in validating and ensuring the safe use of indigenous plants in human and animal medicine.

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