



African Snakebite Institute

E-Mail: johan@africansnakebiteinstitute.com

Tel. +27(0)824942039

Fax +27(0)86 525-2559

www.africansnakebiteinstitute.com

Skype Bugudada

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REPTILE NEWS

Hi all,

Swaziland Snakebite Symposium

The **Swaziland Snakebite Symposium** was held at the Simunye Country Club on 12 and 13 October 2013. This was a joint **Thea Litschka-Koen/African Snakebite Institute** initiative. Snakebite is an enormous problem in Swaziland with few doctors and medical staff knowing how to treat snakebite. Most clinics and hospitals do not stock antivenom resulting in extended hospitalisation of patients, many of them children, and numerous operations often resulting in the loss of limbs.

The conference was a total sell-out with the bulk of attendees being doctors and medical staff from Swaziland but with a number of people from South Africa in attendance. As for presentations, the top snakebite experts in Africa were called upon to deliver a variety of talks and interactive workshops. The talks were of exceptional quality and without doubt the best debate on snakebite



treatment ever held in Africa.



From left to right: Dr. Colin Tilbury, Dr. Darryl Wood, Dr. Jonathan Pons, Dr. Jenna Taylor, Jason Seale, Dr. Allen Liebenberg, Richard Mastenbroek and Thea Litschka-Koen

Dr. Colin Tilbury is a medical doctor currently based in the DRC and working for International SOS. He has dealt with numerous snakebites over the years and has written various papers on the subject. Colin did various talks and covered ***Epidemiology of Snakebite in Swaziland, Diagnosing Snakebite and Emergency Clinical Management, Snake Venoms and the Main Clinical Symptoms, Surgical Procedures in Snakebite, Long-term Effects of Snakebite, The Importance of Case Histories and The Direction of Future Research in Snakebite.***

Dr. Darryl Wood works at Ngwelezane Hospital near Empangeni and, with his team, deals with hundreds of snakebites every year. Darryl covered ***Syndromes and the Medical Management of Snakebite, Antivenom Treatment and Research – A Pilot Study in KZN.***

Dr. Jonathan Pons, a specialist ophthalmologist from Swaziland, spoke on ***Spitting Snakes and Venom in the Eyes*** and ***The Benefits of early skin grafts.***

Dr. Jenna Taylor, an anaesthetist from Albert Luthuli Hospital in Durban spoke about ***Airways Management*** and presented interactive workshops.

Dr. Allen Liebenberg, a veterinarian from Broederstroom spoke on ***Snakebite in Domestic Animals.***

Jason Seale from Hartebeespoortdam Snake and Animal Park spoke on ***First Aid for Snakebite in Swaziland*** and ***Snakebite and Traditional Practises*** while I did a talk on Characteristics of ***Swaziland's Venomous Snakes***.

Richard Mastenbroek travelled from Rotterdam in the Netherlands for his talk on ***Antivenom and their Cross Reaction***.

The symposium was largely self-funded but with generous sponsorships from SWAKI, RSSC, Lihlandze Projects, Swaziland Meat Wholesalers, Aspen and Mr. Veggies.

As for the proceedings, talks were debated at length with numerous worthwhile discussions. Most people went home quite enlightened and some a little confused. Thea achieved more than she ever imagined – many doctors and their medical staff now having far more expertise when it comes to treating snakebite victims and good awareness regarding the problems around snakebite and its ramifications. The Director of Health Dr. Simon Zwane was also present and made acutely aware of the problems facing snakebite victims. Thea and Clifton also run the Swaziland Antivenom Foundation and their aim is to ensure that major hospitals have adequate stock of antivenom in all major hospitals. Donations are welcome and anyone interested can contact Thea (TLitschka@rssc.co.sz) or myself.

The proceedings were filmed and the DVD will soon be available @ R200.00. Please contact Thea if you are interested in acquiring a copy. I am also putting together a pdf document that will contain all of the talks and this will be available free of charge.

Snakebite Season

With the warm weather and first summer rains the snakebite season has kicked off with a number of victims hospitalised in the past few weeks. The incidences will increase and peak around January to April when roughly 80% of the snakebites are reported. As for first aid, there are two very important aspects. Firstly get the victim to a hospital with a trauma unit in a safe manner. Secondly and equally important, the killer in serious snakebites is a lack of breathing. Assist the victim with artificial respiration and if you are far from medical care, obtain and learn how to use a Bag Valve Mask. Such a device, if properly used, can save lives.

Snake Course

The next Gauteng Snake Awareness and Venomous Snake Handling Course takes place at Heia Safari Ranch in Muldersdrift on Saturday 02 November 2013. Please contact me for more details.

The next Northern Cape Snake Awareness and Venomous Snake Handling Course takes place in Springbok on Saturday 26 October 2013. Please contact me for more details.

New Equipment

Scorpion Torches: I have received stock of scorpion torches. They are very handy as scorpions fluoresce when the purple beam shines on them and are thus easily spotted. They are made from industrial aluminium and cost R120.00 (R25.00 for local postage/packageing).

Safety Glasses: Ideal for spitting snakes and other industrial uses, these safety glasses come with both frames or a strap. They seal the eyes adequately without streaming up. R200.00 (Local postage/packaging add R25.00)



Snake Tongs: I still stock the standard tongs that sell for R950.00 (excluding postage) and have also received a shipment of Pillstrom Tongs. They sell for R1,500.00 (excluding delivery)



Newsletters: A number of people have recently requested to be added to the reptile nest mailing list. If you know of anyone who wishes to be added, please forward particulars (Name, surname and E-mail address). If you wish to be removed from the mailing list, please respond to this E-mail with unsubscribe in the subject.

Kind regards,

Johan Marais

Author of *A Complete Guide to Snakes of Southern Africa*

African Snakebite Institute

E-Mail: johan@africansnakebiteinstitute.com

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