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Veterinary Genetics Laboratory receives R250 000 from Unite Against Poaching in support of its RHoDIS□ project

By CvB

Posted on 20 July 2012

Dr Cindy Harper, head of the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) at the Faculty of Veterinary Science receives a cheque of R250 000 from Mr Kevin Gillmer (right), Chief Executive of Unitrans Volkswagen and Audi division that is also the main sponsor of Unite Against Poaching

On 17 July during a function at the Village Ridge Boutique Hotel in Waterkloof, Unite Against Poaching handed a cheque of R 250 000 to the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) of the Faculty of Veterinary Science.

This donation, the second made to the VGL by Unite Against Poaching, is in support of the RHoDIS™ project, a Rhino DNA Index System managed by the VGL that utilises the latest DNA profiling techniques to combat poaching and strengthen rhino conservation by promoting scientific management of the rhino population. The VGL is collecting DNA samples of rhinos across the country to create a database using the unique DNA profile of individual rhinos.

Dr Cindy Harper, head of the Veterinary Genetics Laboratory at the Faculty accepted the cheque and emphasised that the donation will enable the laboratory to increase its capacity to investigate poaching incidents and assist to build the genetic database of living rhino, which is now also incorporating animals in countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya, Botswana and Namibia.

Unitrans Volkswagen and Audi division is the main sponsor of Unite Against Poaching, donating R500 of their own profits for each vehicle sold at one of their branches. The Chief Executive of Unitrans Volkswagen and Audi division, Mr Kevin Gillmer said the donation was supporting work being done at the coal face of counter poaching activities. This latest donation is the second made to the VGL since 2011, bringing the total contribution by Unite Against Poaching to R500 000.

Apart from Unite Against Poaching, the vital work of the VGL has been supported through donations by, among others, SANParks, the WWF, the SA Hunters Association and 'Right for Rhinos' over the last two years.

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