

MSc Opportunity:

Ecology and epidemiology of African swine fever in Ndumu Game Reserve

African swine fever (ASF) is a highly infectious disease, endemic to Sub-Saharan Africa. The ASF virus circulates in two cycles; a sylvatic cycle and a domestic cycle. The sylvatic cycle involves African wild pigs, such as warthogs *Phacochoerus africanus* and bushpigs *Potamochoerus larvatus*, and endophilic *Onirithodoros* ticks. Wild pigs do not display clinical signs of the disease unlike domestic naïve pigs, for which the ASF virus has a near 100% mortality rate. Ndumo Game Reserve (NGR) is located within the Swine Fever Control Area of South Africa, on the border with Mozambique in KwaZulu-Natal Province. The aim of this study is to assess the potential risk of the presence and maintenance of ASF in Ndumo Game Reserve and the NGR wildlife-livestock interface.

We are seeking for an MSc candidate to execute an exciting Research MSc degree to study the ecology of the potential sylvatic cycle of African swine fever in the NGR.

Research activities will consist on:

- Census of wild pigs (warthogs and bushpigs) in the NGR
- Collection of ticks in warthog burrows
- Analysis of the presence of ASFV in ticks (optional) at ARC-OVI
- Implementation of questionnaires among small scale farmers at the interface of NGR

Conditions:

A living stipend of 3000 ZAR/month will be provided during field activities

Basic accommodation is available at the premises of KZN Wildlife in NGR

Vehicle and fuel for field work will be provided by UP

Basic training on line transects census, tick collection and laboratory analysis of ticks for the presence of ASFV will be provided to the student.

Requirements:

A degree in veterinary science, biological science, ecology or natural science.

Previous field work experience with wildlife will be an advantage.

Basic knowledge in statistical analysis using R, STATA or another software package

The candidate should be able to spend approximately 4 months/year in NGR.

Applicants should provide their CV as well as a letter of interest to either Prof Ferguson or Dr Etter, below. **Deadline:** Friday October 31st 2014.

Prof. Willem Ferguson, CFES, Department of Zoology and Entomology, University of Pretoria. E-mail: willemferguson@zoology.up.ac.za

Prof. Eric Etter, Epidemiology Unit, Production Animal Studies, Faculty of Veterinary Science, Onderstepoort. E-mail: eric.etter@cirad.fr



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