

OBITUARIES

Dr Hymie Ebedes 1936-2015

Tribute by Simon Ebedes

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Groundbreaking veterinarian passes away at the age of 79.

Dr Hymie Ebedes who has died aged 79, is probably best known for his discovery in 1965 of Anthrax while based at Etosha National Park (NP), Namibia and being instrumental in the efforts to recognise the disease and control its spread. As well as his groundbreaking work in the use of tranquilizers (Etorphine M99) to capture wildlife, Dr Ebedes also wrote the manual for translocation of Black Rhino and was the first person in Namibia to catch wild animals by helicopter and transporting them by airplane.

Preferring to be called Hym, he was born in Ermelo, South Africa on 14 June 1936. Hym graduated from the University of Pretoria, veterinary faculty at Onderstepoort in 1959. From 1959 to 1964 Hym ran a private veterinary practice in Springs, and in 1965 he married Audrey, who one day came into the practice with her sick poodle.

Hym's veterinary career with wildlife began in 1965 when he was appointed the first biologist/veterinarian to Etosha NP. Following his tenure at Etosha, Hym returned to South Africa in 1975 first working for the government as the State Veterinarian, then in 1980



Dr Hymie Ebedes who died in November 2015, with an African Elephant at Hartebeespoort Dam.

he moved to the National Zoological Gardens in Pretoria to further his research in the critical care for wildlife as Chief of Veterinary Services, and where he was based until 1989. During his time there he was a key contributor to the book *Capture and Care of Wild Animals*. His pioneering research on the use of long acting tranquilizers for wild caught animals has saved thousands of animal's lives; this research limited the high mortality of wildlife captured in the wild by minimizing their stress. Hym advocated for the humane treatment and transport of wildlife who were being subjected to cramped spaces and extended periods without water during capture and translocation operations.

After nine years at the Pretoria Zoo he was appointed Wildlife Specialist at the Department of Agriculture in Pretoria from 1989 to 1995, where he wrote the code for South African Bureau of Standards for the *Capture, Care and Translocation of Wild African animals*. This included the guidelines for humanely caring for animals at wildlife auctions. Hym was also responsible for the deregulation of the strict captivity guidelines for African elephants on private game reserves by allowing the use of electric fences to contain them.

Hym was a charismatic character, equally interesting and interested and quick to compliment younger students, sharing his knowledge was always important to him. Hym spent his final working years teaching about wildlife diseases at the Pretoria Technikon, his classes were popular and he inspired the next generation of wildlife vets and scientists. Hym shared his passion to care for animals across the world, this included taking five white rhino to China, he also served on many committees for the training and welfare of African Elephant.

Among the prestigious awards he received were the National Agriculturist of the Year award from the South African government in 1993 and the Lycaon Award in 1995 from the South African Veterinary Association (SAVC) for his outstanding contribution to wildlife conservation and ecology.

Hym who died on the 24 November 2015 in Pretoria, is survived by his wife Audrey, two sons and one daughter: Simeon, Michael and Gertrude.