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PRESS RELEASE

MoA set to recruit FNU Veterinary graduates

Suva, Fiji Islands. The Ministry of Agriculture is keen to recruit Veterinary Science graduates from the Fiji National University's College of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (CAFF).

This was revealed by the Director Animal Health and Production, Avinesh Dayal while speaking as Chief Guest at the World Veterinary Day celebrations held at Koronivia Campus today.

The first cohort of Vets are expected to graduate at the end of next year, after completing the five and half year programme.

Dayal said the new graduates will assist in easing the shortage of animal doctors in the country.

"We are hoping to get some more vets from abroad and we would also like to take in Veterinarians that FNU will be graduating. We will be more than happy to absorb them in the near future," said Dayal.

Dayal highlighted the importance veterinarians play in society and encouraged students to work hard while at the University and learn from experienced Vets that are currently serving in Fiji.

He said Vets improve the health and well-being of animals which in turn improves the health and well-being of humans and the environment.

"Veterinarians are responsible for preventing, controlling and monitoring animal diseases, whether they are endemic to our country, or introduced as an exotic disease, whether they are zoonotic and can cause diseases in humans or they are non-zoonotic. Vets are in the frontline when it comes to combating and controlling these diseases," Dayal said.

"Vets are also responsible food security and safety. They are involved right from the farm level (disease outbreaks on farm) to processor level (abattoirs) and right up to the commercial enterprise that would sell the animal products to the public."

"Vets are also responsible for the education and professional development of newly graduated veterinarians, veterinary students and veterinary staff. This ensures that in the long run, continuing veterinary education as well as advancement of knowledge, including the interactions with other professionals will contribute to the global achievement of economic growth, reducing poverty and hunger and promotion of good health," he added.

Year 5 Bachelor of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry student, Jessica Dev said students are always excited to mark the event as it provides them an opportunity to share with guests what they have been learning during the course of their studies.

Dev said rubbing shoulders with experienced Vets provided them an opportunity to learn further about their profession.

“Celebrating World Vet Day is one of the most looked forward events for us. We make presentations to guests and also learn from them through the experiences they share with us during our discussions,” said Dev.

Two Year 5 students made their presentations on their Clinical experiences during their practical classes. The World Veterinary Day this year was marked with the theme *‘The role of the Veterinary profession in the Sustainable development to improve livelihoods, food security and safety.’*

The FNU recently signed a contract for the construction of the region’s first Veterinary Hospital Complex at Koronivia Campus. The Government of Fiji has given an allocation of \$3.0 million for the year 2017-2018 for this project.

The hospital will consist of isolation wards, dog and cat ward, x-ray room, dental facility, treatment room, prep and store room, surgery room, six consultation rooms, post mortem facilities, DNA lab, Post PCR lab together with other facilities.

Professor Healey said the hospital will be of great assistance in training the specialists to curb the shortage of vets in the Pacific.

“At the moment, in Fiji most of the vets are expatriates on short term contracts. This hospital transforms for the nation, our ability to produce and support the livestock sector and this is an area which we know has huge potential if we actually had the trained staff to support that.”

Professor Healey said FNU is committed in its endeavor to achieve its vision of a quality education provider that is contributing positive economic returns to the nation and lives of animals as well in partnership with a caring, sustainable animal healthcare system.

Currently, there are 125 students enrolled in the Veterinary Science programme at CAFF.

For further information, please contact Kalpana Kaajal on Email: kalpana.kaajal@fnu.ac.fj or Phone: 3394000 ext. 2886

About the Fiji National University: The Fiji National University (FNU) was established through the merger of 7 government-owned tertiary institutions in Fiji, and commenced operations from 1 January 2010. The constituent institutions are found at over 40 different locations across Fiji, and collectively offer Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas, Degrees, Postgraduate qualifications and Skills Upgrading for those who are already in employment. Approximately 30,000 students pass through the University each year. Over the last six years of its operations, the University has registered major achievements with regard to new programme delivery, quality improvements and contribution to research and publications via its 5 Colleges: The College of Humanities & Education (CHE), the College of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences (CMNHS), the College of Engineering, Science & Technology (CEST), the College of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (CAFF), the College of Business, Hospitality & Tourism Studies (CBHTS) and the National Training & Productivity Centre (NTPC).