12 December 2014 was a memorable day in the Faculty’s history — it saw the first graduating class of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree (DVM). The new graduates are pictured here with Dean Professor Ken Hinchcliff.

Much is happening in the new Faculty of Veterinary and Agricultural Sciences. In December we had our first combined graduation, which was made doubly special as it included the first graduates of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

This year has seen the new faculty’s first intake of students, with 153 commencing the Bachelor of Agriculture (a 63 per cent increase over last year) and 130 students commencing the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.

I find it heartening that there is such strong demand for an education in agricultural and veterinary sciences, which provide graduates with the foundation for rewarding lifelong careers.

These careers include the opportunity to improve human and animal health through production of food and fibre in a sustainable manner and ensuring the health and wellbeing of domestic and wild animals, while at the same time respecting the environment.

I look forward to seeing their contributions to the industries we serve, in Australia and abroad.

In this Broadcast, you’ll read of research, upcoming events and the achievements of our remarkable students and alumni. It is an inspiring introduction to the new Faculty.
A team of students is working to improve public health and animal welfare in Sikkim, in the Himalayan foothills.

Developed and delivered in collaboration with Australian-based Vets Beyond Borders (VBB), the pilot project, which built on the highly successful Sikkim Anti-Rabies and Animal Health Program (SARAH), was funded through a University of Melbourne Vice-Chancellor’s Engagement Grant.

Far from the expected classroom sizes of around 30 pupils, team member and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine student Aashima Auplish says many of the participating schools had several hundred students in each session. In just two weeks the project reached an audience of more than 8700 people.

The focus was on identifying dog behaviour, rabies treatment and identification, and rabies prevention – followed up with a section on general dog health and wellbeing, and how these approaches impact on individuals and pet owners.

The project team – Aashima Auplish, Alison Clarke, Trent Van Zanten and project leader Dr Kate Abel – worked on developing content for around eight months. The material included slide show handouts, skits, inflatable dogs and a number of pre-prepared videos.

Dr Charmaine Tham, President of VBB, says the SARAH project offered a great opportunity to explore the inclusion of an education program across the organisation’s work in other countries.

“The SARAH project was established in 2006 and is very much a collaborative effort between VBB, our funding body, Fondation Brigitte Bardot in France, and the local Sikkim government to run these animal health, desexing and vaccination programs, mainly to reduce rabies,” Dr Tham says.

“The challenge for volunteers and staff across the world is to develop and deliver engaging education programs, which take into account factors like the language barrier or in-country limitations. The student team did a wonderful job of transcending these challenges and they created a very impressive program. The quality of work they delivered was outstanding.”

Already the project has sparked interest from other organisations. Ms Auplish has recently completed an internship in Geneva with the World Health Organization, largely from connections made in Sikkim.

“It’s important that we map the impact of our work,” she says. “NGOs and their funding bodies need solid evidence to support these programs, so we hope to illustrate that impact through the methods we used.”

Read more at: voice.unimelb.edu.au/volume-10/number-11/class-dog-health
STUDENT PROFILE
SARAH FUSINATO

An interest in dairy herd health, calf rearing and growing up on the family’s dairy farm, have influenced Sarah Fusinato’s career planning.

Currently a first year Bachelor of Agriculture student, she plans to major in animal health and production and then going on to study a Master of Food Science. She feels this background will be ideal to working in new product development, in animal health or managing the family farm.

Sarah (pictured) is the first in her family to study at the University. The Faculty has awarded her a scholarship, allowing her to live in college and making the transition from school to university easier.

NEWS UPDATE

NEW MASTERS IN 2015
The Master of Food and Packaging Innovation is a new cross-disciplinary degree for those working in the food packaging industry. The course is an initiative of the Faculty and Mondelēz International, whose brands include Cadbury, Vegemite, Kraft and Nabisco, and is supported by the Victorian Government.

For details visit: fvas.unimelb.edu.au/study/courses/master-of-food-and-packaging-innovation/overview

The Faculty is also working with Mondelēz on a joint research project that has attracted funding from the Australian Research Council. This will gain insights into Asian consumer behaviours; inform ingredient use, consumer experience and product design and packaging; promote Australia as a producer of quality food; and increase exports and commercial rewards.

AUSTRALIAN HONOURS
The Faculty congratulates its alumni and friends whose contributions have been recognised in the 2015 Australia Day Honours list.

Dr Brendan Crabb AC
For eminent service to medical science as a prominent researcher of infectious diseases, particularly malaria, and their impact on population health in developing nations, as an advocate, mentor and administrator, and through fostering medical research nationally and internationally.

John Freney AO (dec)
For distinguished service to conservation and the environment through research into greenhouse gas production, climate change and the efficient use of nitrogen fertiliser.

Dr Barbara Maddern-Wellington AM
For significant service to veterinary science, to professional associations, to animal welfare, and to the community.

Frank Mickan PSM
For outstanding public service to the primary industry sector in Victoria, through the introduction of strategies to improve dairy farming practices.

Alison Teese OAM
For service to conservation and the environment in Victoria.

SUPPORT FOR EQUINE RESEARCH
The Myer Family has generously provided funds that have allowed the purchase of an additional large animal ventilator. This equipment provides the necessary breathing support to horses when under anaesthesia, and its purchase benefits the Faculty’s equine research and treatment.

SCHOLARSHIP FOR GV STUDENTS
Retired local farmer Betty Thornton has established the Warren Thornton Memorial Scholarship, in memory of her brother. The scholarship is for a student undertaking the Bachelor of Agriculture, who comes from the Goulburn Valley and who has an interest in dairy production.

BRONZE PLAQUES
The careers of two former deans, Ken Jubb (Veterinary Science 1969-1990) and Sam Wadham (Agriculture 1927-1957), have been honoured among a series of bronze plaques, now a feature of Professors’ Walk. The plaques record recipients of the University of Melbourne Award, which recognises those individuals who have made an outstanding and enduring contribution to the University and its scholarly community.

Read all citations at: our-history.unimelb.edu.au

Sir Samuel Wadham (1891-1972)    Kenneth Jubb (1928-2013)
Pictures: Courtesy of the University of Melbourne Archives.
Alumna wins top US award

California-based alumna Dr Alison Van Eenennaam (née Balson, BAgSc(Hons) 1983) has received the prestigious Borlaug CAST Communication Award.

The Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) presents this award annually to a specialist who communicates the importance of food and agricultural science to the public, policymakers, and news media.

Dr Van Eenennaam, now a faculty member at the University of California, Davis, fits this description perfectly. As one nominator said, "Dr Van Eenennaam has distinguished herself and her university by tireless effort in the pursuit of science and communicating the importance of science in improving the quality of human life".

Science and communication are the hallmark of Dr Van Eenennaam’s work. She has an active research and extension program – but she also has the ability to relay important information about agriculture and food production. She has given more than 250 presentations around the world and has appeared on US media outlets including the Dr Oz Show, Animal Planet, and National Public Radio.

She has also served on advisory committees both in the US Department of Agriculture and the US Food and Drug Administration to provide expert counsel on animal biotechnology, and has been the recipient of numerous distinguished honours.

The author of many articles and book chapters, Dr Van Eenennaam led the Task Force teams for two important CAST publications: The Science and Regulation of Food from Genetically Engineered Animals, a Commentary; and The Potential Impacts of Mandatory Labeling for Genetically Engineered Food in the United States, an Issue Paper.

The Borlaug CAST Communication Award honours Nobel Prize winner Dr Norman Borlaug (1914–2009) who has been called “the Father of the Green Revolution”, “agriculture’s greatest spokesperson” and “The Man Who Saved a Billion Lives”. 