

SCHALK CLOETE



Schalk grew up on a sheep farm in the Sutherland district in the South African Karoo region, where he was schooled in the handling of sheep and in wool classing from an early age. He acquired his higher education up to the MSc level at Stellenbosch University and subsequently acquired a PhD from the University of the Free State. His work experience includes a stint as a professional officer at Giyani in the Limpopo Province, where he concentrated on natural pasture management and beef production systems during 1978-79. He joined the Animal Production team at the Elsenburg Research Station near Stellenbosch in the Western Cape during January 1980. His work initially involved specialist extension and research but gravitated more towards research after he obtained his MSc in Sheep and Wool Science on environmental and genetic factors affecting

reproduction rate in sheep during 1986. His PhD studied the selection of sheep for an increased reproduction rate, the genetic basis of peri-parturient behaviour of ewes and lambs as well as the interface between these areas. He was appointed as a professor extraordinaire at Stellenbosch University shortly after graduating with his PhD in 2002, where he still contributes to the under- and postgraduate training of students.

Schalk was involved as sole, senior or co-author of more than 350 papers in peer-reviewed, accredited journals, books and proceedings. He acted as supervisor or co-supervisor of more than 40 postgraduate students. His research focus was mostly on breeding, behaviour and, more recently, welfare of sheep and ostriches. He was closely involved in obtaining genetic parameters for conventional and novel hard-to-measure traits in South Africa, as well as the realised genetic improvement of traits of economic importance in both species. Material for these studies was obtained from resource flocks under institutional control as well as from industry flocks subjected to performance testing under the South African Small Stock Improvement Scheme. He also collaborated with local and international scientists in joint studies that resulted in a commendable publication output. Interaction with peers in Australia and New Zealand during Schalk's regular attendance of AAABG conferences over the past two decades laid the foundation for the majority of these joint efforts. He attended all but two of the 12 AAABG symposia organised since 1997, contributed 46 papers as senior or co-author and introduced 14 colleagues to the association. Of these papers, 20 were prepared by 11 postgraduate students under his supervision. Since retiring in March 2019, his continued research interests include characterising sheep and ostrich genetic resources as well as studying sustainable and ethical husbandry and breeding practices for both species. He also spearheads the local Ovine Genomics Working Group that envisages the eventual genomic selection for hard-to-measure traits in South African sheep. This working group attempts to consolidate the efforts of scientists, both local and abroad, to achieve this quest.

Schalk's work has been recognised by several invitations to act as an invited speaker at South African or international scientific meetings on sheep or ostrich breeding as senior- or co-author. He received bronze and silver medals from the South African Society for Animal Science (SASAS) for excellence in research, as well as a SASAS President's award for guidance to upcoming scientists. He was appointed as the Western Cape agriculturist of the year by the Agricultural Writer's Association and received a merit certificate from Merino SA for his service to the local Merino Industry. Three students under his (co)supervision have been awarded SASAS bronze medals for research excellence. The recognition of his work on animal breeding and genetics in South Africa by being elected as an AAABG fellow is thus appropriate.