

Vale Thomas Schnieder

13.11.1952 - 16.5.2012

Professor Thomas Schnieder, Director of the Institute for Parasitology at the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Germany, unexpectedly passed away on 16th May 2012 after a short battle with cancer. At only 59 years of age, his death was far too premature and cut short the career of an internationally esteemed veterinary parasitologist. Professor Schnieder was an international authority in the fields of veterinary helminthology and control of parasitic diseases. His sudden death was a shock to many colleagues around the world.

Thomas Schnieder was born in the small town of Stade, northern Germany, on 13th November 1952. He was raised and educated in Lower Saxony, one of the major agricultural areas in Germany. After school he first took an interest in military service, and then went on to become a veterinarian.

Thomas studied Veterinary Medicine in Munich and Hannover, Germany. After graduating from the then School of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, he began his scientific career by pursuing a *Doctor medicinae veterinariae* at the Institute for Parasitology with Professor Michel Rommel. Thomas' doctoral dissertation described studies investigating the reduction of *Toxoplasma* oocyst shedding in cats by medicated feed and was published in 1982. For the following 2 years, he remained in the same research group on a postdoc position and continued his research on tissue cyst-forming coccidia.

In 1984, Thomas left Hannover to accept a job as Veterinary Technical Advisor with Pfizer in Karlsruhe, Germany. During his time at Pfizer Thomas gained extensive experience in the pharmaceutical industry, which laid the basis for his later very productive collaborations with industry. In 1986, Thomas returned to the Institute for Parasitology in Hannover at a senior lecturer level and, besides his continuing research on tissue cyst-forming coccidia, developed a strong interest in parasitic nematodes.

From 1989 to 1990, Thomas was awarded a research fellowship by the German Research Foundation (DFG). He used this time for overseas studies as a Visiting Research Fellow at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Melbourne in Werribee, Australia. He worked closely with Ian Beveridge and Robin Gasser and became acquainted with new molecular biological techniques in veterinary helminthology. Thomas' experiences in Australia laid the basis for his future molecular biologically orientated research in veterinary parasitology.

After his return to Germany, Thomas established several new molecular techniques at the Institute for Parasitology in Hannover. In 1993, he published his habilitation thesis describing studies on the physiopathology, epidemiology and diagnosis of *Dictyocaulus viviparus*, including

newly developed diagnostic tests based on recombinant antigens, for which he was awarded the *Venia legendi* in the field of Parasitology by the School of Veterinary Medicine Hannover.

In the following years Thomas worked as senior lecturer and adjunct professor at the Institute for Parasitology in Hannover. He expanded his research in diverse areas of veterinary parasitology, with strong research foci on the epidemiology and control of helminthic diseases in livestock and companion animals, the molecular biology of helminths, anthelmintic resistance, the use of recombinant antigens in diagnosis and immunoprophylaxis of parasitic diseases, and new molecular-based tests for diagnosis and differentiation of parasites. In 2000, the School of Veterinary Medicine Hannover bestowed on Thomas a Professorship in Parasitology. In 2001, he became the Director of the Institute for Parasitology, a post which he held with great distinction until his death.

Thomas was a passionate parasitologist and great advocate of veterinary parasitology over many years. His research interests and enthusiasm brought him into contact with many scientists from around the world and made him a key member of several national and international committees and advisory groups. Among others, he acted as President of the German Society for Parasitology (DGP) and was a Charter Diplomat of the European Veterinary Parasitology College (EVPC). When he died, he served as coordinator of the special interest group on parasitology and parasitic diseases of the German Veterinary Society (DVG) and of the German Team of the European Scientific Council Companion Animal Parasites (ESCCAP Deutschland). He was also a member of the Executive Committee of the World Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology (WAAVP) for the past 9 years. His sudden passing leaves a gap in these societies.

Thomas has substantially advanced the field of veterinary parasitology through his research and teaching. His work comprises over 300 publications and presentations, including more than 150 scientific articles and several book chapters. He was a member of the editorial board of several scientific journals, including the *Journal of Veterinary Medicine B*, *Veterinary Parasitology* and *Parasitology Research*. Thomas was also the editor of a leading German textbook on Veterinary Parasitology. He trained and supervised many postgraduate students and was the mentor of a number of prominent young parasitologists.

Thomas' talents extended beyond his scientific work. He was an active sailor and had a great interest in soccer which he shared with his sons Tobias and Daniel. He also spent a considerable amount of his spare time as a musician and singer in the German Irish Folk band *Fortune's Favour* with whom he played in public events and produced videos that are broadcast on the internet.

Thomas will be sadly missed by those who knew him as a friend, colleague and mentor. Thomas leaves his wife Heidrun and his two sons.

*Michel Rommel
Christina Strube
Astrid M. Tenter*