

Van Soom is a veterinarian with a PhD in bovine in vitro fertilization. She has a general interest in comparative animal reproduction and have been working as a professor at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ghent University, Belgium, teaching assisted reproduction in domestic species and small animal reproduction for more than 20 years now. Van Soom has been a member of the IETS for many years, and she said she considers IETS as an important society to connect researchers and practitioners working on assisted reproduction from all over the world. Her interest in IETS is reflected by the fact that she served as an elected governor for IETS in 2007 and in 2013. Due to her previous work on viruses (her husband is a virologist) and embryos, she has also been a member and chair of the HASAC (Health and Safety Advisory Committee) Research subcommittee of IETS for about ten years, and helped in writing a chapter of the Manual. During COVID in 2021, she had (together with Patrick Blondin) the unfortunate honor of being the program chair of the only virtual conference of IETS.

Van Soom has been working with many domestic species, with a main focus on cattle, but also with horses, pigs, cats, and dogs (she is a hobby breeder of English springer spaniels and loves to go on long walks with her dogs!). As her interest extends to all mammals, she has also supervised PhD students working on wildlife projects. Currently, her primary research focuses on the role of extracellular vesicles as key mediators in the interactions between gametes, embryos, and their environment, in domestic animals and even in humans. Additionally, she is exploring cryopreservation as a method for preserving valuable genetics in both domestic animals and wildlife. Another emerging area of research in our clinic is the study of the genital microbiome and its impact on fertility in dogs and cats.

Statement from Van Soom: "IETS is important to me because it is bringing people together with diverse backgrounds from all over the world, with a common interest in embryo technology. It also provides people with novel insights and practical tools to apply after each annual meeting. The connection with CANDES, DABE, and the sister societies is a unique property of IETS which I value very much. As a (vice) president of IETS, my previous experience in the board will help me to continue to work with IETS, to organize the annual meetings which can never be replaced by virtual meetings because we need to meet in person in order to collaborate more worldwide."