

UP vets provide radiation treatment to fight Chaos the lion's skin cancer

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Dr Katja Koepfel (front), students and staff members of Lory Park Zoo attend to Chaos, the lion

Chaos, a 16-year-old lion from the Lory Park Zoo in Midrand, Johannesburg, this week underwent a third round of radiation at the Mediclinic Muelmed in Pretoria after being diagnosed with skin cancer by veterinarians in the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science.

Chaos was in April diagnosed with a rare squamous cell carcinoma on his nose and flank by Dr Katja Koepfel, a wildlife veterinarian in the Faculty, which is based in Onderstepoort, Pretoria. "Due to the location of the tumour on the nose and the fact that the lion is not easy to handle, excision of the tumour was not possible," Dr Koepfel says. A decision was made in consultation with Prof Gerhard Steenkamp, another very experienced veterinarian in the Faculty, to try radiation therapy.

The big cat is now recovering after his third session and will undergo one last session next week. According to Dr Koepfel, Chaos is responding very well to treatment. "The lesion seems to be shrinking. Chaos will undergo a total of four treatments at Muelmed over a period of four weeks."



In order to make this possible, the lion has to be darted and moved to the hospital in an anaesthetised condition, and then returned to the zoo in his crate. As Chaos weighs around 260 kg, this is a huge operation, which requires many hands. During the treatment sessions, Dr Koeppel was accompanied by some of the Faculty's students, who rallied at the opportunity to assist and observe.

Chaos is one of the original cats that was brought to the Lory Park Zoo when it opened. He is set to undergo his third radiotherapy session on Thursday 23 May, with his last session due to take place next week.

Click on the link to view a story on Chaos broadcast on eNCA: <https://youtu.be/EA0hmOqqW-Y>

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