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Cataract Surgery Performed on Deano, Houston Zoo's Sea Lion

Update: March 17, 2009

After 3 weeks of recovery from his cataract surgery, Deano the California sea lion is back home!

On Saturday, March 14 Deano's veterinary ophthalmologist Dr. Kohl Herman checked Deano's eyes and was happy with what he saw – both eyes are progressing as expected. With that, Dr.



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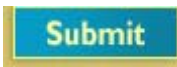
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Herman gave Deano his ticket home!

Since March 14 Deano has been continuing his recovery in an off exhibit area of the McGovern Mammal Marina. He'll enjoy his first day back in the exhibit pool soon, so check back with us in a few days for an update.

Deano underwent almost 6 hours of surgery on February 20 to have cataracts removed from both eyes. The surgery was performed by a team of highly trained veterinary ophthalmologists and anesthesia specialists at the Houston Zoo's Denton A. Cooley Animal Hospital, assisted by the Zoo's resident veterinarians and hospital veterinary technicians.

Deano was observed closely during and after his recovery from anesthesia and had 24 hour ICU-type monitoring for the first two days after the procedure.

For the past 3 weeks, Deano has been recovering at the Zoo hospital and has been out of the water to allow his eyes to heal. He received eye drops 4 times a day and several oral medications to prevent infection and glaucoma. Deano was examined daily by his Zoo veterinarians and weekly by Dr. Herman who volunteers his services to the Zoo.

Houston Zoo veterinarians and the staff of the Denton A. Cooley Animal Hospital extend their thanks and warm regards to Deano's medical team:

Dr. Carmen M. H. Colitz (DVM, PhD, DACVO)
Dr. Eric J. Abrahamsen (DVM, Dipl., ACVA)
Dr. Michael S. Renner (DVM)

View [photo album](#) of Deano's surgery.

Update: February 24, 2009

Deano the sea lion continues to recover from eye surgery. His appetite still a bit diminished but otherwise he's doing very well.

Update: February 21, 2009

Deano ate today for the first time since his surgery yesterday, consuming about 15 fish. He's sleeping well and resting comfortably.

Update: February 20, 2009

Deano, a 25 year old California sea lion is in intensive care at the Houston Zoo's Denton A. Cooley Animal Hospital

following surgery today to remove cataracts from both eyes. Deano will receive round the clock post-operative care for the next 48 hours, attended by the Zoo's animal hospital veterinarians and veterinary ophthalmology and anesthesia specialists.

Deano displayed an existing condition in his left eye upon his arrival a year ago at the Houston Zoo. When the left lens luxated (detached) Deano's caretakers, Houston Zoo veterinarians and veterinary eye specialists began making plans for surgery. With the recent luxation (detachment of the lens) in his right eye, the time table for Deano's surgery was advanced because of quality of life concerns.

General anesthesia was necessary for Deano's 4 hour cataract surgery. From the results of pre-operative exams and tests, Houston Zoo veterinarians and the specialists who performed the surgery and anesthesia felt confident that Deano was a good candidate for the procedure. For several weeks prior to the operation, Zoo veterinarians and specialists performed a series of tests and exams similar to what a human patient might undergo prior to a surgical procedure – preliminary blood work, an electrocardiogram (ECG), and visits to the Zoo hospital to familiarize Deano with the environment where the procedure was performed and with the anesthesia equipment that was used.

Houston Zoo veterinarians, sea lion keepers and veterinary ophthalmology and anesthesia specialists are preparing for a delicate surgical procedure – cataract removal surgery for Deano the Zoo's 25 year old California sea lion.

Deano's cataract surgery will require general anesthesia. From the results of pre-operative exams and tests, Deano appears to be in good health. His advanced age presents risks and concerns for a surgical procedure necessary to improve his quality of life. Houston Zoo veterinarians, sea lion keepers and specialists have been preparing Deano for the procedure for several weeks.

Deano's pre-surgical preparation is similar to what a human patient might undergo prior to a surgical procedure – preliminary blood work, an electrocardiogram (ECG), (click below to see a video of Deano's echocardiogram), and visits to the Zoo clinic to familiarize him with the environment where the procedure will be performed as well as some of the anesthesia equipment that will be used.





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Questions and Answers about Deano's Cataract Surgery

Q: Why is Deano being prepared for surgery?

A: Deano has bilateral cataracts. Cataracts are hardening and thickening of the lens. In addition, Deano's lenses have "luxated." In other words, the lenses have come loose and are floating in the front chamber of his eyes. It means Deano has lost vision in both eyes and needs the cataract surgery to restore his sight. Deano's veterinary ophthalmologist says it is difficult to determine how painful a luxated lenses are, but at the least it is probably uncomfortable because the lenses are rubbing against the inside of the corneas.

Q: How will the surgery be performed?

A: The surgery will be performed in the Houston



Zoo's Denton A. Cooley Animal Hospital. Deano will receive a general anesthesia and an agent that will prevent the eyes from moving during surgery. For each eye, an incision will be made in the cornea and the lens will be removed. The entire procedure can take up to 4 hours.

Q: What is involved in Deano's post operative recovery?

A: Deano may need to be kept out of the water for up to 3 weeks after surgery. During that period Deano will stay in the Cooley Animal Hospital and will not be on exhibit at the McGovern Mammal Marina during the recovery. Post-operative treatment of the eyes with eye drops up to four times a day is required – a treatment that may be needed for several months after the surgery.

Q: Will Deano be able to see after the surgery?

A: Yes. There is usually a scar on the cornea but his ophthalmologist says the scar does not affect sea lions' vision.

Q: Is Deano a good candidate for this type of surgery?

A: Deano is 25 years old. In zoos, California sea lions can live into their 30s. General anesthesia is required for Deano's surgery and with any anesthesia there is a risk involved. However, his veterinarians and his keepers have taken several steps and precautions to make sure anesthesia is as safe as possible.

In the weeks of preparation leading up to the surgery Deano underwent an electrocardiogram (ECG) and extensive blood tests to assess his heart health and his general health. Based on the pre-operative blood work and his ECG, the Zoo's veterinarians and the specialists who will perform the surgery and anesthesia report Deano is in good physical condition and that his heart appears to be healthy.



Q: Who are the doctors that will perform the surgery?

A: Dr. Carmen M. H. Colitz (DVM, PhD, DACVO) practices veterinary medicine at the Animal Eye Specialty Clinic in West Palm Beach, FL and is an adjunct professor at Ohio State University and at North Carolina State University. During her career, Dr. Colitz has performed more than a thousand cataract surgeries on animals, including dogs, cats, horses, llamas, 22 California sea lions, a harbor seal and a Guadalupe fur seal. Dr. Colitz also conducts research on the formation of cataracts in animals and humans.

Dr. Eric J. Abrahamsen (DVM, Dipl., ACVA) is one of two anesthesia specialists who will be attending to Deano during the surgery. Currently the anesthesiologist at Ocala Equine Hospital in Ocala, FL, Dr. Abrahamsen has taught large animal anesthesia at the University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center, the University of Florida and at Ohio State University.

Dr. Michael S. Renner (DVM) is among a small group of veterinarians in the world that work full time with marine mammals. In a career spanning more than 17 years, Dr. Renner has successfully administered anesthesia to hundreds of California sea lions. Dr. Renner has performed similar cataract surgery with Dr. Abrahamsen and Dr. Colitz in the past.

Comments for Cataract Surgery Performed on Deano, Houston Zoo's Sea Lion:

Rebecca on 26-Feb-09 3:49 PM (27 days ago) [permalink](#)

Thank you for the wonderful show at my November 8th wedding, Deano! So glad to hear you are recovering from your surgery...get well soon!

Kelley on 19-Feb-09 6:47 PM (34 days ago) [permalink](#)

I hope you do well Deano. Heal fast so you can be swimming again soon.

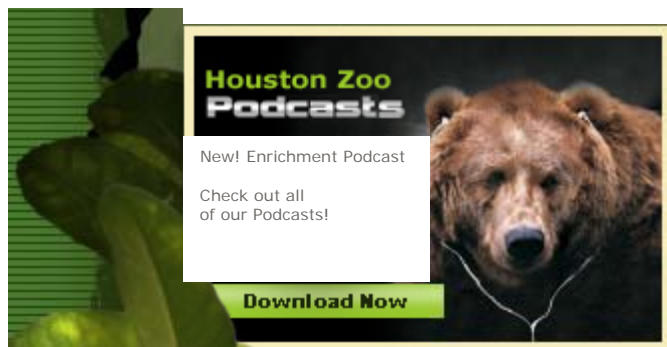
tara on 19-Feb-09 4:09 PM (34 days ago) [permalink](#)

wish you well deno cant wait to see you after

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