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Homeless dog gets nose job

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Johannesburg - Maximus the dog now owns the bragging rights to a brand-new nose.

The German Shepherd cross-breed has several people to thank for this - not least of them, his veterinarian Dr Gerhard Steenkamp, who calls him an "amazing" dog.

After many medical tests, including a CT (computerised tomography) scan, and a four-hour operation to his severed snout, Maximus was recovering in the intensive care unit at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute outside Pretoria on Friday.

"He spent the night in ICU. He's eating, he's doing very well. He's already running around," said Steenkamp.

The animal welfare organisation, Wet Nose, introduced Maximus to Steenkamp after the dog was saved by Werner Appel, who spotted him wandering on his farm with a severely injured snout.

Steenkamp said the trauma to his nose had exposed its insides, which posed a serious skin cancer risk.

"This operation was for his health and not for cosmetic reasons," said Steenkamp.

Before he could perform the operation, he had to make sure it was not a tumour that had caused the injury.

"We have no history of him so I did a CT scan and biopsies of the nose. One of the possibilities was that this was a tumour eroding away his nose.

Trauma

"But there was no cancer visible in the tissue. It was trauma. He had suffered multiple fractures that had already healed...

"Maximus could use his nose. He was able to breathe and smell. The problem was not in the functioning, but the angle at which his nose was chopped off, which exposed its insides to the sun.

"That tissue is not meant to be exposed to the sun because that could become a skin cancer," said Steenkamp.

He then phoned around and found a company, Roth Medical, which was willing to donate titanium plates for the reconstructive surgery.

Steenkamp performed the operation on Thursday and expected Maximus to be ready to go back to Wet Nose by Monday. The animal welfare organisation was looking for a home for him.

By that time, he would probably be enjoying celebrity status. He has already featured in several newspapers, and one of the biggest magazines in the country, *You/Huisgenoot*, had secured an interview with Maximus, said Steenkamp.

He hoped Maximus would not get too snooty about his fame.

Steenkamp said he had a lovely nature, especially considering that he was not used to people.

"He responds so well to attention, and when he sees the students and nurses, he just loves it. It's amazing."
SAPA

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