

Bull Elephant Ninio Gets A Visit From The Dentist



Zoo keepers at Poznan Zoo in Poland called in the experts last week when bull elephant, Ninio, fractured one of his tusks.

Keepers enlisted the help of Dr Adrian Tordiffe, research veterinarian at Pretoria Zoo, South Africa and Dr Gerhard Steenkamp, renowned veterinary dentist. The expert duo arrived in Poland last week to assess Ninio's fractured tusk and treat an infection, which had developed in the affected tusk, despite the best efforts of the 13 year old elephant's keepers.

Dr Tordiffe immobilised the 5.2 ton elephant; Ninio is just 13 years old but is very large for his age, following in the footsteps of his father, Yossi, who is believed to be the largest elephant in Europe, weighing a massive 7 tons. Once Ninio was asleep, Drs Tordiffe and Steenkamp examined him and found that the tusk had become infected, as a result of the pulp tissue becoming exposed.

Dr Steenkamp was told that the tusk had first been injured in 2005; at the time it was treated successfully, but it was weaker and subsequently fractured again a short time ago. As the left tusk had become infected, Dr Steenkamp said that it was not possible to save the tusk and it had to be removed. The right tusk was also found to be slightly cracked on close examination.

Dr Tordiffe said that the procedure had not been as straight forward as hoped, as Ninio fell down after being immobilised with his legs splayed and it took the team around 40 minutes to move his legs into a more comfortable position.

After three hours of drilling, Dr Steenkamp had only managed to create a canal and remove the infected pulp and the team made the decision to postpone removing the tusk until a later date; further treatment on the cracked right tusk will be carried out on Wednesday this week. The canal will act as a drainage system to prevent abscesses and the canal has now been cleaned and sealed to prevent any infection and ensure that Ninio does not experience any pain.

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