



REGISTER NOW to stand the chance to win a 16GB iPad 3 with wifi and 3g.

GET STARTED HERE



A jumbo dental job for 5-ton Ninio

November 26 2012 at 03:30pm

Related Stories

→ [Rhinos dehorned to prevent poaching](#)

Pretoria - What do you do when you have a five-ton elephant with a tusk ache? You call in the best. When Ninio, a bull elephant at Poznan Zoo in Poland had a dental dilemma his keepers called in the help of Dr Adrian Tordiffe, Pretoria Zoo's research veterinarian, and renowned South African veterinary dentist Dr Gerhard Steenkamp.

Tordiffe and Steenkamp arrived in Poland last week to assess the situation. Ninio had fractured one of his tusks and an infection had set in despite efforts of zoo staff.

Tordiffe immobilised the elephant which, although only 13 years old, weighs 5.2 tons. It is believed that his father, Yossi, is the biggest elephant in Europe, weighing around seven tons.

Tordiffe and Steenkamp were told that Ninio had first fractured his left tusk, which has a circumference of 40cm, in 2005. He was successfully treated for the damage by Poznan Zoo staff, but subsequently damaged it again in 2010.

"The pulp cavity of the tusk was exposed and infected, causing some swelling of his face. Due to the infection and time elapsed since the fracture, it was not possible to save the tusk and it had to be removed," said Tordiffe. Ninio's right tusk was also found to be cracked.

The elephant was immobilised inside his night room. "Unfortunately, he went down with splayed hind legs and it took us almost 40 minutes to move his legs and to get him into a more comfortable position on his side," said Tordiffe.

Steenkamp drilled out the central core of the tusk to begin the extraction process. After three hours, he had only managed to create a central canal and cleared out all the infected pulp.

"The tusk was simply too big to remove in one procedure and we were concerned about how the elephant would recover from such a long procedure.

"We had achieved the goal of creating effective drainage, but felt that it would be in the elephant's best interest if we postponed the rest of the extraction. This tusk is essentially dead and the remaining pieces of ivory will have to be removed at a later stage. The drainage created will prevent any abscesses from forming. This would also give us time to modify some of our equipment to cope with a tusk of that size," said Tordiffe.

Ninio recovered from the anaesthetic and it was decided to delay any further treatment on the cracked right tusk until Wednesday.

Tordiffe reported that he and Steenkamp amputated the right tusk just behind the crack and some dental pulp was removed. The canal was sterilised and a solid nylon implant was screwed in to plug the hole. The tusk is now sealed and can grow out normally.

The infected left tusk can only be treated in a few months' time to remove the remaining pieces of ivory. "The early procedure done on Ninio's left tusk will render him relatively pain-free and will reduce the risk of him developing a systemic infection from that tusk," said Tordiffe.

Steenkamp, who has performed several tusk extractions, believes this is the largest tusk that any veterinarian has tried to remove.

The South African vets will have a couple of months to adapt their equipment to deal with the tusk before Ninio undergoes his next round of dental surgery. - Pretoria News

[Hungry for more scitech news? Sign up for our daily newsletter](#)

[Comment on this story](#)



An elephant eats lunch at the zoo. Picture: Masi Losi

Most Viewed

- SA to get two more national gardens
- No refund on your phone? Nonsense!
- Life on Mars, but not as we know it
- Earth getting warmer - Nasa's latest data
- When is a foot long not a foot long?

lifedirect Click Here for a quote today!
Changing Lives (FSP 24769) T's & C's apply.

Join us on

vodacom **save R252**

Start your year with this smart deal
BlackBerry™ Curve™ 9320 smartphone

R169
PMX24 on Top Up 99 Vodacom 4 Less*

[Click to get the deal](#)

*T&C's apply

Property

Classifieds

Motors



Sandton

R 3,250,000
3 Bedroom(s)
2 Bathroom(s)

[View Details](#)

[Search](#)