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## A COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE ON OUR TWO POACHED RHINOS

It has been a busy time for our veterinary team, specifically when it comes to the two poached rhinos in our custody. Over the December/ January period, a total of five procedures were performed by the specialist team!

We bring you an update in this latest blog post.

**12 December 2014**

On Thursday 12 December, a team gathered to examine the two surviving poached female rhinos to establish the status quo relating to their treatment. Dr Gerhard Steenkamp (well-known veterinary specialist from Onderstepoort) and Dr Peter Rogers (local wildlife veterinarian) were present. It is very important that the animals' wounds are treated regularly to prevent bacterial infection, or infection caused by insects potentially contaminating their wounds.



*Lions Den is darted for the procedure*

Lion's Den, the older cow, was darted first. Her grown calf, Dingle Dell, remained close by. Once the anesthetic took effect, the team quickly got her in place for the procedure. On closer observation, it was clear that her cast was damaged in its middle portion.

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*The team works to get Lion's Den to an upright position so that she does not suffocate*

Local anaesthetic was injected close to the wound to block the nerve receptors, and a painkiller was administered intravenously.

Everyone collectively held their breath as the cast was removed, but thankfully it had not become infected, nor had it been infested with maggots. Most importantly, the specialists were impressed with the healing progress. The only concern was that the exudate (discharge) from the wound had softened the skin around the horn.



*The screws that hold the cast in place are removed*

May 2013

April 2013

March 2013

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*Everyone breathes a sigh of relief as the cast is removed*

The wound was cleaned with water, and disinfected with F10 before Baxter TISSEEL fibrin sealant was applied. A calcium alginate dressing and an absorbent wound dressing (to prevent the exudate from further softening the tissue) was then applied over the sealant.



*The wound is cleaned with water*



*A calcium alginate dressing is applied*



*The finished product*

A new cast was carefully placed over the wound, and was then drilled and stapled into place. On this occasion no screws were placed over the healing tissue, but were instead drilled into its surrounds. Lion's Den was then dewormed, dipped and given antibiotics. Operation complete!



*Lion's Den is up and about*

Dingle Dell was darted next. Her cast was still intact and looking good.



*Dingle Dell is darted next and her procedure begins*

The first order of business was to remove her cast so that the team could establish how far healing had progressed. Another collective sigh of relief, as the progress was remarkable. The wound was washed out and cleaned with antibacterial ointment, followed by the application of the Baxter TISSEEL fibrin sealant used to seal up its edges to help speed up the healing process.



*Dingle Dell's cast is removed and the wound cleaned*

One of the previous holes drilled to secure the cast seemed to be infected and was flushed thoroughly. The calcium alginate dressing and absorbent wound dressing were applied before the new cast was put in place.



*Dingle Dell's wound is dressed and the dressing applied*

So all in all, things were looking positive for both Dingle Dell and Lion's Den. The team was extremely excited about the progress that both rhinos had made.

### **28 December 2013**

On the 28th of December, a team was called out to replace Lion's Den cast once again! Janelle, Dr Rogers' assistant, was there to perform the procedure in his absence.

Apart from a few fly eggs and a maggot in the wound, everything was looking fine. The standard procedure followed (involving anaesthetising the wound, cleansing with F10 and an antiseptic powder, dressing, and application of the cast) with no complications. The old cast was used to determine where

the older drill holes had been positioned, and the new cast was then secured to the horn with screws drilled into the side of the horn, as well as into the healing tissue to make sure that it did not come loose.

As the cow's breathing rate was low, Lion's Den had to be given special drugs to wake her up somewhat during the procedure. The team was however quick to finish securing the cast, and as soon as it was in place, a reversal drug was administered so that Lion's Den could become fully conscious. She was soon on her feet and walking around.

#### 06 January 2013

Once again, Lion's Den's cast was found to be compromised after her persistent rubbing. The news was really good this time though, as there was no infection or maggot infestation whatsoever. Furthermore, Dr Rogers was impressed at how the wound had healed on its one side. The small part of the horn that was left behind when the poachers removed it had actually started to grow over the wound! Unfortunately, the sinus was still open on the other side.

This time a metal plate was added to the cast in an attempt to prevent Lion's Den from rubbing away at the material on the cast. The procedure was simple, and Lion's Den was quick to stand up once the anaesthetic had been reversed.

She soon ran off, and did not appear to have undergone any medical procedure!

#### 16 January 2014

By now it is surely quite obvious that Lion's Den has earned herself a reputation for being a little difficult.

While Dingle Dell had managed to keep her cast intact since her last procedure on 12 December, Lion's Den had once again rubbed hers off. As the healing process causes the wound to itch, Lion's Den cannot help but rubbing her nose against the bark of trees in an attempt to scratch it – thereby damaging the cast in the process. So far she had managed to rub through even the thickest of casts, and not even the metal plate applied on the 6th January could withstand her attempts to relieve the itch!



*Lion's Den is darted and anaesthetised*

At first the team struggled to remove the screws from the cast, but finally succeeded. Once again, no maggots or fly eggs were visible, and the wound showed signs of a slight improvement since the cast had been replaced ten days previously. Doctor Rogers observed that the granulation tissue was forming nicely over the damaged flesh.



*The wound looks good and granulation tissue is forming*



*The wound is treated*

The team decided to try something new with Lion's Den in another attempt to stop her from damaging her cast. Instead of placing a metal plate in between two layers of plaster, pop rivets were used to secure the metal plate to the cast itself.





*A metal plate is sized as a dome over the cast*



*The metal plate is secured*

The team concluded the procedure in the hope that they would not be called out too soon to once again replace another damaged cast.

#### **21 January 2014**

Today it was Dingle Dell's turn. When it was discovered that her cast had been damaged, a team was once again assembled to replace it, and to check up on her progress in the process. After quite a struggle to dart her, Dingle Dell was finally anaesthetised and the team immediately got to work.



*Founder Lente Roode observes the procedure*



*Dingle Dells wound is almost completely healed*

The results were incredibly positive. After nearly 6 weeks of wearing the protective cast without incident, Dingle Dell's wound had nearly completely healed! A few maggots were found, but Doctor Rogers confirmed that their presence was nothing to be concerned about. They were quickly removed through the standard cleansing, disinfecting and treating process.



*The wound is treated*



*The metal dome is fitted over the wound*

As with Lion's Den, a metal plate was placed over the cast and secured with pop rivets and screws. But this time the metal plate was cut larger than the wound, and secured to form a dome over the cast.



*Once again Lion's Den is on her way*

Dingle Dell was given penicillin and dipped to prevent ticks. The reversal drug was then administered to wake her up, and she was 'up and running' very quickly.



*Dingle Dell recovers quickly and is soon on her feet again*

We remain optimistic for a full recovery for both animals, and are hopeful that Lion's Den's calf will signify a new beginning after the traumatic experience and subsequent rehabilitation endured by these two animals.

As always, we will keep you posted as to their progress.

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Filed under: [Anti-Poaching](#), [Conservation](#), [Rhinos](#)

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## 1 RESPONSE

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### Gerda Smith Says:

Absolutely stunning. I am so so happy! Go Rhino go

Posted on January 27th, 2014 at 9:59 pm

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## LEAVE A REPLY

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