



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Linda Hardwick
Director of Communications
602.663.3254
lhardwick@phoenixzoo.org

Jessica Graybill (for Dr. Steurer)
Director of Surgery, Southwest Veterinary
480.635.1110 X 1024
jgraybill@azvs.com

PHOENIX ZOO BORNEAN ORANGUTAN RECEIVES GROUNDBREAKING SURGERY *Veterinarians and “Human” Doctor Team Up to Help Zoo’s Beloved Orangutan*

PHOENIX (March 15, 2018) – Veterinarians from the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation (ACNC)/ Phoenix Zoo recently teamed up with Dr. Jeff Steurer of Southwest Veterinary Surgical Service and Ear, Nose and Throat surgeon Dr. David Simms M.D., of Arizona Otolaryngology Consultants to treat Daniel, a twelve-year-old Bornean orangutan at the Zoo with sinusitis and air sacculitis.

Respiratory disease is a common health issue for orangutans. It is multi-factorial but often starts with a sinus infection.

“Daniel had been experiencing a recurring sinusitis with air sacculitis,” says Dr. Gary West, Executive Vice President of Animal Health and Collections at the Phoenix Zoo. “We had attempted to treat the condition medically and also with surgery of the air sac, but when the symptoms reoccurred we knew we needed to address surgery of the sinuses and the air sacs. We are fortunate that we found an incredibly talented team willing to take on this complicated surgical procedure.”

“I thought I was getting pranked,” says Dr. David Simms when he was first called by Dr. West to inquire about performing sinus surgery on an orangutan. “I’ve performed thousands of surgeries on humans, but this is the first one I’ve ever done on an orangutan! The orangutans’ nasal cavity is similar to humans but due to the shape of their skull there are important differences within the sinuses to be noted before attempting surgery. To familiarize myself with the case, I reviewed the CT scans of Daniel’s head to confirm the disease and to visualize the anatomic structure. In addition, we were able to download the CT images into a computer and with the use of a 3D printer we were able to print a life size replica of his skull to be used as a guide for the actual surgery. The endoscopic surgical procedure went perfect and I am very optimistic that this will make a significant impact on his long-term health.”

This is the first surgery of its kind performed on an orangutan in the United States. To the Zoo’s knowledge, it has only been performed on an orangutan in the UK and Switzerland but no long-

term follow-up was ever recorded. Zoo veterinary staff were confident that the team assembled could perform the procedure and that without it, Daniel could develop more progressive respiratory disease, and this would lead to a shortened life expectancy.

Dr. Jeff Steurer had previously operated on Daniel and removed the purulent material that had accumulated in his air sacs. "Due to the nature of Daniel's sinusitis, the infection returned, and he was showing signs of labored breathing, coughing, a distended air sac and frequent mucous production. This second time around, we performed a marsupialization of the air sac, creating a permanent opening to help prevent reinfection. It may look a little odd and unsettling, but the end result will allow for continued drainage, thus preventing the buildup of the purulent material and the respiratory signs that are associated with it."

Primate Manager Mary Yoder says Daniel is feeling and acting much better. "He is doing fantastic! He is active, his appetite has returned, he is engaging with guests and enjoys training with the animal keepers. He is back to his playful self."

This surgical procedure was a successful collaborative effort by the animal care and veterinary staff of the Phoenix Zoo and surgeons; Dr. Simms and Steurer. The reoccurrence of air sacculitis is common in orangutans that have had the disease. But, by addressing the sinus infection and the air sac infection together we may greatly increase Daniel's chances of a complete resolution of his chronic respiratory issues.

You can see Daniel in the Orang-Hutan; People of the Forest exhibit located on the Tropics Trail at the Phoenix Zoo.

About the Arizona Center for Nature Conservation

The Arizona Center for Nature Conservation operates the Phoenix Zoo and the South Mountain Environmental Education Center. The ACNC advances the stewardship and conservation of animals and their habitats while providing experiences that inspire people and motivate them to care for the natural world.

The Phoenix Zoo is the only zoo in the Valley accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and is a non-profit zoological park, serving 1.4 million guests annually. The Zoo is home to more than 3,000 animals, many of which are endangered and threatened species. For information on upcoming events, exhibits and activities at the Phoenix Zoo, visit www.phoenixzoo.org.

The South Mountain Environmental Education Center re-opened through an Operating Agreement between the Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department and the ACNC. The facility is a hub for guests exploring the park/preserve as well as a gathering place for the community to learn about plants, animals, natural history and the conservation needs of the Sonoran Desert. It also is a popular destination for school field trips and family outings. Learn more at www.smeec.org.

About Arizona Otolaryngology Consultants

With 5 locations across the Valley, AOC provides multiple levels of comprehensive primary ENT care including the diagnosis and management of all diseases of the ears, nose, throat, and sinuses. In addition, AOC provides the full spectrum of subspecialty ENT care including the management of pediatric airway, cancer, skull base surgery, neuro-otology, advanced head and neck surgical and reconstructive procedures, and craniofacial surgery. Learn more at AOCphysicians.com.

About Southwest Veterinary Surgical Service

Southwest Veterinary Surgical Service, P.C. is a specialty referral surgical practice whose board-certified surgeons have over eighty years of combined surgical expertise and are dedicated to providing your pet with the highest quality surgical care with an emphasis on pain management and prevention. Our highly-trained staff is committed to enhancing the quality of life for our patients and strengthening the human-animal bond.