



media *release*

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PORCUPINE'S SIGHT RESTORED THANKS TO ANIMAL HEALTH TRUST VETS

When zoo handlers at Chessington World of Adventures Resort noticed that a porcupine's eye had become blurry they immediately contacted experts at the Animal Health Trust (AHT) for advice.

With a suspected cataract causing the poor vision in her left eye, Mwoiba, the 10 year old female porcupine, (one of two porcupines at Chessington) was promptly admitted to the AHT for investigation. She was transported from her home at Chessington World of Adventures Resort, in Surrey to the AHT, based in Kentford, Suffolk, in the hope that surgery might successfully restore her sight.

On arrival Claudia Hartley, Head of Small Animal Ophthalmology at the AHT, and the Ophthalmologist tasked with treating Mwoiba, soon discovered that she was in no mood to be inspected: "It was instantly clear that Mwoiba did not want to be examined. She continually gave a defiant rattle of her spines as a warning to us all to 'watch our step'."

In order to carry out the examination, and any potential surgery, Mwoiba had to be anaesthetised, and then intubated – a difficult procedure kindly carried out by Steve Philp from International Zoo Vet Group. This enabled Claudia to perform an ocular ultrasound – a vital procedure pinpointing the exact damage to the eye.

"We could see that she had suffered a severe trauma to her left eye," explains Claudia. "We suspected she had incurred this whilst 'arguing' with her housemate,

and had suffered a perforating trauma (perhaps from one of their threatening spines).”

Fortunately for Mwoiba, she had not detached her retina during the scuffle. (A detached retina would have meant no surgery could rectify the problem and restore her sight.)

With Mwoiba already under anaesthetic, Claudia was able to perform the necessary surgery to try and restore her vision: “We removed her cataract and could see the trauma had scarred the retina above the optic nerve, but that some normal retina was still present.”

Now, seven weeks after the cataract surgery, and Mwoiba has been reintroduced to her mate and is on a weaning dose of medications.

On the success of the surgery, Claudia Hartley says: “We’re thrilled to see that vision has returned to Mwoiba’s left eye again, and we hear from her handlers that she is back in rude health. She is a real character, and we at the AHT are all thrilled to have been able to help her see clearly again.”

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For further information, please contact:

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Additional notes:

- The Animal Health Trust (AHT) is an independent charity, employing over 200 scientists, vets and support workers. It aims to improve the health and welfare of horses, dogs and cats through research. It also provides specialist referral services and continuous education to vets. Visit the website at www.aht.org.uk