

Special Veterinary Care for Tiger Roy

Thirteen-year old tiger Roy came to PAWS as a cub with his sisters, Kim and Claire, when the roadside zoo where they were born was shut down. The young cubs were products of "puppy mill"-style breeding, to produce a steady supply of cubs to be used for photo sessions with the public, handling and petting, and other exploitative uses. Captive tigers in these situations are often encouraged to breed with their own siblings, parents or other close relatives in order to produce desired color mutations. Until they were rescued, Roy, Kim and Claire were destined to become part of this cycle of abuse, including breeding when they became mature enough. Roy's crossed eyes and crooked spine are examples of the kinds of genetic defects often associated with irresponsible breeding.

In October 2016, keepers at PAWS noticed an unusual appearance on the surface of Roy's left eye, and our veterinary staff prescribed appropriate antiviral and antibiotic medications that were carefully hidden in his food. Roy seemed healthy in every other way, active, and alert with a good appetite. Keepers and veterinary staff regularly checked on his eyes, and the lesions seemed to be quiet and even looked like they were healing. In late March, however, Roy's left eye suddenly and unexpectedly became very inflamed. PAWS' veterinarians examined his eyes under anesthesia and discovered that his left cornea was severely damaged beyond repair, and that he was now blind in that eye. In order to relieve pain and prevent severe infection, the decision was made to remove his eye.



With Roy safely anesthetized, Dr. Gai examines his eyes.

On April 7th, Roy was brought into The Pat Derby Animal Wellness Center for surgery. This recently completed facility is ARK 2000's first on-site clinic, with state-of-the-art equipment that enables us to provide the best veterinary care possible. Roy's surgery was the first major procedure to take place in the Wellness Center, which was designed to easily accommodate important procedures on large animals. Dr. Jennifer Curtis performed Roy's enucleation surgery, assisted by Dr. Jackie Gai. PAWS' staff registered veterinary technician Lynn Dowling monitored anesthesia and provided a vital support role, assisted by longtime PAWS friend and supporter Kirk Stafford, RVT. PAWS' president, Ed Stewart, sanctuary manager, Brian Busta, and tiger staff were also instrumental in making this surgery safe and successful.



Preparing to begin surgery, left to right: Lynn Dowling, RVT, Dr. Jennifer Curtis, Dr. Jackie Gai, Kirk Stafford, RVT.

Roy recovered quickly after surgery, and almost immediately seemed more comfortable. Tissue and other samples collected during surgery will be analyzed by U.C. Davis and Cornell diagnostic laboratories in an effort to determine the underlying cause of his eye lesions. Dr. Gai has also been consulting with veterinary ophthalmologists at U.C. Davis. Our veterinarians have developed a treatment plan intended to keep Roy's remaining eye healthy. His condition is very unusual, and every effort is being made to keep him comfortable

and preserve his vision. We thank Kirk Stafford for generously volunteering his time and lending his expertise to help Roy.

Your support is vital to our veterinary program and providing expert medical care to the animals at our sanctuaries. [Click here](#) to make a donation to PAWS today.

