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## Orangutan Knobi doing well after surgery

*Condition not life-threatening; ovaries removed to improve ape's quality of life*

Des Moines, Iowa – August 31, 2007 – Knobi, a 27-year-old female orangutan at Great Ape Trust of Iowa, is recovering in The Trust's orangutan building from a 2 1/2 hour surgical procedure conducted by a team of veterinarians and medical doctors Thursday, Aug. 30, at Iowa State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

The medical team removed Knobi's ovaries after discovering that a cyst of significant size had developed on one of them, said Dr. Rob Shumaker, director of orangutan research at the world-class scientific research center in southeast Des Moines. About a week ago, the normally active and playful ape experienced a loss of appetite and lethargy, and was "really not herself," Shumaker said.

The condition was not life threatening, said Great Ape Trust staff veterinarian Dr. Brigetta Hughes, but the pain she was experiencing was affecting her well-being.

Last spring, a medical examination revealed a benign fibroid tumor about an inch in diameter on Knobi's uterus, a condition that is common in human women, but the medical team decided not to remove it unless problems persisted. When Knobi again became symptomatic about two weeks ago, the medical staff initially thought the tumor might be the cause of her pain, irregular reproductive bleeding and a recurring urinary tract infection. When the symptoms persisted for four or five days despite treatment with

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an antibiotic and ibuprofen, the Great Ape Trust veterinary team made the decision to transport Knobi to Iowa State's Veterinary Teaching Hospital for surgery.

Hughes said the medical team first attempted a laparoscopy, a procedure in which an instrument somewhat like a miniature telescope with a fiber-optic system brings light into the abdomen, but were unable to see the cause of the problem because of fibrous scar tissue. Instead, Knobi underwent a laparotomy, a procedure in which an incision is made in the abdomen, and her ovaries were removed.

The procedure was similar to one routinely performed on human women, according to Hughes. Because of the presence of scar tissue and the possibility of trauma, the medical team elected not to remove Knobi's uterus, as would normally be the preferred treatment course in human women. However, Hughes said hormonal changes resulting from the removal of the ape's ovaries likely will cause the tumor to shrink.

A day after the surgery, Knobi was recovering at the pace veterinarians expected and was receiving around-the-clock care from Great Ape Trust's orangutan staff. She is being given a non-steroid anti-inflammatory drug for pain management.

"She has a lot of pain from the surgery and is taking a pain medication," Shumaker said. "Her recovery will take some time."

Knobi was anesthetized before leaving The Trust and was transported to and from Iowa State in a cargo van outfitted as a veterinary suite. During her recovery, she has been separated from Azy and Allie, The Trust's other two orangutans, but they can see and hear her, which is important to all three of the apes' well-being, Shumaker said.

Knobi is expected to make a full recovery. A resident of Great Ape Trust since February 2005, she was born Sept. 30, 1979, at Henry Doorly Zoo in Omaha, Neb.

Shumaker credited the successful medical procedure to a well-coordinated effort by the Great Ape Trust medical team and public safety staff, which provided an escort to and from Ames; the staff at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital; and Dr. Timothy G. Leeds, a medical doctor with Gynecology & Obstetrics Physicians and Surgeons of Ames.

"The Iowa State folks were just exceptional," Shumaker said. "It was a phenomenal team effort here on campus and by Iowa State and Dr. Leeds."

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In addition to Hughes and Leeds, members of the medical team included Dr. Dennis Riordan, a consulting veterinarian from Ankeny, and a team from the Veterinary Teaching Hospital that included Dr. David Merkley, professor of small animal surgery, and Dr. Steve Leshem, a small animal surgery resident.

Also participating were Dr. Tricia Beasley, intensive care/small animal surgery intern; Dr. Kristina Miles, associate professor of radiology; Dr. Bonnie Hay Kraus, clinician in anesthesiology; Dr. Andrew Claude, resident in anesthesiology; Dr. Dean Riedesel, professor of anesthesiology; Cindy Wooledge and Rachael Bodkins, both small animal surgery technicians; and Mandy Hoyt, a senior studying anesthesiology.

Dr. Sally Prickett, director of the Veterinary Teaching Hospital, and Dr. Robert King, senior veterinary clinician were also on hand during the procedure.

## **\GREAT APE TRUST BACKGROUND**

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to [www.GreatApeTrust.org](http://www.GreatApeTrust.org).

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