

# Sintang Orang-utan Centre

## Sponsor update



Hi again from Sintang! Last time I wrote we had just received Prima and Pongo at the rescue centre, two young orang-utans who had been kept as pets in a nearby village since being taken from the forest by poachers. I am pleased to be able to tell you that both are settling in well, and have recently finished their quarantine period.

I got quite a surprise when we anaesthetised Pongo to undergo the routine quarantine tests for Hepatitis B and Tuberculosis, and collect identification information such as fingerprints and hair samples. While we were conducting a physical examination, we found a lump under the skin around her left ankle! One of the caretakers said the person they rescued her from had said there was a bullet in her leg somewhere. We decided that while Pongo was already under anaesthetic we would remove it.



We moved her through to the clinic, which as well as doubling as a kitchen now was to act as an operating theatre as well! We don't have a table in the clinic so Pongo was placed on a towel on the floor, and one of the assistants held a head-torch for me in lieu of a surgical light! While the caretakers clipped and scrubbed the area, I sterilised some instruments in Milton and started scrubbing up! The operation itself was very brief; the shotgun pellet was located just under the skin and was easily removed, and the wound stitched together easily. Pongo recovered very well from her anaesthetic and her wound is doing well—although she managed to remove the stitches after five days!

During her second week of quarantine, Prima developed diarrhoea, which due to the cramped facilities here at the moment spread to Luna, the youngest of our orang-utans here. We identified the cause to be *Balantidium Coli*, a type of amoebic dysentery! Thankfully they both responded well to a prompt course of antibiotics, but it was a nightmare convincing them to take the medication! Prima will take tablets crushed in honey if they are not too bitter, but spits out anything that can't be masked by the honey; Luna is highly suspicious of anything you offer her, unless you can hide it on a biscuit without making it too soggy!

*This week, the surgical instruments donated by Veterinary Instrumentation were used in Pongo's operation. Many thanks for your support!*



We are also taking steps to improve things for Pinky, Neng and Pongo, our three older orang-utans who are housed separately from the youngsters. Because these three ladies are so strong, they can't be taken into the forest at the moment because we don't have any staff strong enough or experienced enough with adult orang-utans to control them. So we are providing enrichment for them in their cages, so that they can spend more of their time foraging for food like they would in the wild. Sometimes we wrap up their food with newspaper so they have to unwrap each layer to get to the food; sometimes we hide it in bamboo tubes; and sometimes we are able to get young coconut fruits so they have to work hard opening the fruit to get to the coconut juice and fruit inside!

Many thanks, Rosalie  
August 2010

This project is grateful to have received kind donations of supplies from Animalcare, Bayer, Boehringer, Dechra, IMS, Intervet, Janssen, Kruise, Merial, Norbrook, Novartis and Veterinary Instrumentation; the contributions from individuals, veterinary practices and hospitals are also greatly appreciated.



# BOS Nyaru Menteng

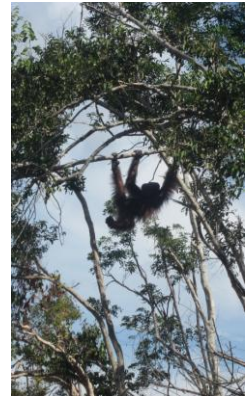
*Cheetah's Fracture, October 2011*



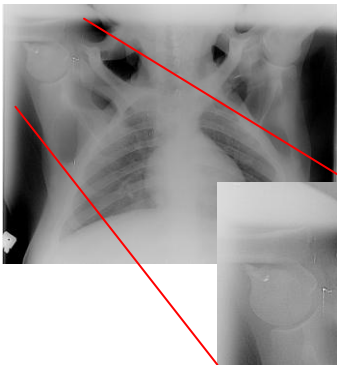
Cheetah is a 12-year-old female orang-utan at the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Reintroduction Project in Central Kalimantan. She graduated from the Forest School stage of the rehabilitation programme in 2006, and has since been living on one of the Nyaru Menteng islands. On these islands, there are no enclosures or cages; the orang-utans live as naturally as possible within the boundaries of the island, and the technicians (animal caretakers) provide additional food on a daily basis to supplement what the forest provides.

In the second week of October, the technicians reported to the medical team that Cheetah wasn't using her left arm properly; she appeared to have a wound on her elbow. Minor to moderate wounds are not uncommon in orang-utans who are climbing in the trees all day, and often with their amazing recovery ability, they may resolve on their own. However, after three days of monitoring, there was still no signs of improvement in her use of the arm, and the possibility of a more serious injury had to be considered. On 15<sup>th</sup> October the medical team decided it would be necessary to bring her to the clinic, so that the wound could be fully assessed and treated.

As with many of the adult orang-utans on the islands, it was not possible to persuade Cheetah down from the trees for transport to the clinic without sedation—but sedating an ape at the top of a tree is not an easy process. Apart from the challenges of delivering a dart of sedative to a moving target, orang-utans have a tendency to climb higher after being darted, and fall asleep up in the branches; as the sedative takes hold, their grip loosens, and they have a long way to fall to the ground. The rescue team that sedated Cheetah set up a safety net at waist level and held it tautly to break her fall, but despite their best efforts she had an awkward landing.



Cheetah was brought to the Nyaru Menteng clinic for assessment and treatment. The wound on her left arm was deep through the skin, and the muscles underneath were swollen and inflamed although didn't appear to be damaged. As well as addressing her wound, the medical team started her on antibiotics, pain relief drugs and put her on a drip.



Over the course of the next few days it became apparent that Cheetah was painful around her right shoulder, despite the wound being on her left arm. She was x-rayed on 19<sup>th</sup> October, which revealed a nasty fracture of her humerus, right up near the shoulder joint, which very likely happened when she fell from the tree. This kind of fracture would be challenging to repair in any animal of Cheetah's size; but in an orang-utan, who needs to be able to support all her weight on that arm while swinging through the forest, the way this injury heals is going to be pivotal in determining Cheetah's future. If the bone doesn't heal well, the arm will have to be amputated; which will mean Cheetah can never be released to the wild.

For a successful surgery, Cheetah needs a highly experienced orthopaedic surgeon, some custom-modified fixative plates to fit her bones, and a long and complicated operation which has to take place within the next two weeks, before the bones try to heal in the wrong position. Afterwards, it will take at least two months of strict rest—and a lot of patience on Cheetah's part—for the bones to knit together and heal. All of us at the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation are praying for a successful recovery for Cheetah, so this beautiful young lady can once again return to swinging in the trees.

We are extremely fortunate to have the expertise of a leading Indonesian orthopaedic surgeon, Dr Endrotomo, who upon hearing of Cheetah's situation very generously offered to fly from Jakarta to Nyaru Menteng in Central Kalimantan to donate his time, expertise and necessary surgical tools to operate on Cheetah's shoulder. An update from our veterinary team at Nyaru Menteng regarding the surgery will follow.

If you are willing to make a donation to help us continue to provide the highest level of care for Cheetah during her recovery, please contact us via the website at [www.orangutan.or.id](http://www.orangutan.or.id)

Cheetah's treatment thus far has been made possible by kind donations of medical supplies and equipment from WSPA, Abaxis and Miss Bärbel Köhler; BOS Nyaru Menteng is very grateful for your support. Cheetah's story was written by Rosalie Dench.