

PRESS RELEASE

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Zoo's oldest orangutan to undergo CT scan

SEATTLE—Melati, a female orangutan at Woodland Park Zoo, will be anesthetized over the weekend and transported off site to a medical facility for a CT scan. The 193-pound orangutan will turn 50 in December and is the oldest orangutan living at the zoo.

According to Dr. Tim Storms, Interim Director of Animal Health at Woodland Park Zoo, the geriatric orangutan has had an existing problem of uterine fibroids and ongoing treatment since 2018. A recheck exam over the summer indicated concerning changes in her uterus and a greatly enlarged and cystic ovary. Melati will have full body CT imaging and a repeat biopsy of her endometrial lining to better define her condition.

"Our zoo team and community care so much for Melati and we want to do everything we can to make sure she has the best available treatment and quality of life. Sometimes that means we have to make very difficult decisions about short- and long-term welfare," said Storms. "In this case, we'll learn more this weekend about the possible need for surgery to address her uterine and ovarian problems."

Consulting radiologist Dr. Rob Liddell and OB-GYN Dr. Emily Norland will contribute their expertise to the procedure. "We're so grateful for the vast network of volunteer medical specialists who graciously donate extensive time and resources to Woodland Park Zoo so we can provide top-notch health care for Melati and each of the 900 animals in our care," said Storms.

The median life expectancy for orangutans is 28 years although orangutans in zoos are living into their 50s because of the evolving field of zoo medicine, which includes geriatric care.

"Anesthesia is inherently a risk for animals and for humans and at Melati's age, there is a higher risk," said Storms. "However, these diagnostics are important and necessary to determine the best treatment for what could potentially be life threatening if we don't address her medical issue. With our dedicated team of veterinarians and technicians and state-of-the-art anesthesia monitoring techniques, I am hopeful for a good outcome that will allow her to continue to thrive in her sunset years."

Melati has lived at Woodland Park Zoo since 1974. She has a daughter, 40-year-old Belawan, and son, 32-year-old Heran, who remain living at the zoo. The other orangutans currently at the zoo are a male, Godek, and female, Batu, both 12. Batu arrived at the zoo in the spring.

There are three species of orangutans and are found only in Southeast Asia: the Bornean orangutan native to the island of Borneo, and Sumatran and Tapanuli orangutans native to the island of Sumatra. A critically endangered species, orangutans belong to the family Hominidae, which includes all four great apes: gorillas, chimpanzees, bonobos and orangutans.

Help save orangutans by adopting the species through the zoo's [ZooParent](#) program, which supports the zoo's animal care, education and wildlife conservation efforts. Woodland Park Zoo supports the [HUTAN-Kinabatangan Orangutan Conservation Program](#) and [Gunung Palung Orangutan Conservation Program](#), both on the island of Borneo.

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