



Tracking the Pack

Time for a Checkup

by Lori Schmidt, Wolf Curator,
International Wolf Center

When managing captive wolves, the ability to deliver proper medical care is critical. Daily exams are done for physical abnormalities, but to do an in-depth inspection and draw blood requires that the wolves be drugged and taken to the wolf lab's exam table for a

checkup. These exams are conducted once every three years or when an animal's condition warrants a more thorough exam.

On October 8, 2004, the veterinary care team assembled for the retired wolves' exams. Center veterinarian Dr. Chip Hanson and board member Dr. Larry Anderson conducted the exams. The wolf care staff, Andrea Lorek Strauss, Nancy jo Tubbs, Jen Westlund, Jim Williams and Jim Ziburski, were on hand to assist. Vermilion

Lori Schmidt prepared to inject Lakota to immobilize her for the exam.



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Community College students observed and assisted, including Jessica Holmes, Alisha Maves, Larisa Skujins, Luke Urevig and Brian Kormanik.

Injecting the wolves with drugs went smoothly. This is one of the greatest benefits of socialized wolves. With limited stress from the injection, the wolves quickly and quietly lay down and fell asleep. Within 15 minutes, all three were resting comfortably in the wolf lab.

All the wolves appear to be in good health, especially for animals nearing 12 years of age, with only minor ailments. Lakota has a small lump on the side of her leg that was sampled and sent to the lab for analysis, and both her eyes showed signs of Grade II cataracts. MacKenzie was treated for a calcium/lipid deposit in her eye. Dr. Anderson injected medication at three sites in her right eye to prevent pigmentation and slow inflammation of the cornea. She had initial swelling in her eye from excess fluid, but within a day she was

Veterinarians Chip Hanson (left) and Larry Anderson examined MacKenzie's eye.



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Dr. Larry Anderson recorded information about MacKenzie's health.

holding it open and showed no signs of favoring the eye or squinting in response to light as she had before the exam.

Lucas had some tartar buildup on his teeth and some noticeable muscle loss in his front right shoulder. The exam also revealed a dead upper incisor tooth, but it is still solid and has no indication of decay. Lucas showed signs of some lipid deposits in his cornea, similar to MacKenzie's, but none of the wolves had signs of glaucoma.

We thank Chip Hanson and Larry Anderson for making these medical exams a priority and treating the animals and the staff with care, patience and respect. And we thank all of the members who support the wolf care program and help ensure that the wolves stay in good health. ■