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Expert Dental Team to Fix Elephant's Tooth

March 15, 2019 – *Jacksonville, FL* – Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (JZG) Animal Care staff are preparing to extract the infected tusk of 29-year-old African elephant, Ali. The surgery is a major undertaking, involving experts from across the country who will collaborate in the procedure.

Elephant tusks are specialized teeth, and several years ago Ali put a small crack in his tusk. Over time, he developed a dental infection that keepers and Animal Health staff had been successfully treating, but his infection recently worsened, and the time has come to take further action. The team intends to extract the tusk. If extraction is unsuccessful, then the tusk will be cleaned and drilled similar to how a root canal procedure would be performed.

If left untreated, his infection could spread to other parts of his body. For humans and animals, optimal tooth condition is an essential component of health and wellness.

The complex surgery will be overseen by Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens' veterinarians and will include specialists from San Diego, Birmingham, and the United Kingdom. It is estimated the surgery could take up to three hours, and while there are always risks associated with anesthetizing any animal, Zoo Animal Health staff feel confident that by engaging the specialists, any remaining risk is manageable.

Ali arrived at Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens in 1997. He was previously a resident of Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch. Ali is the only bull elephant at Jacksonville Zoo and is joined by two older females, Thandi and Sheena.

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About Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida. **The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens is a nonprofit organization and a portion of every ticket sold goes to the over 45 conservation initiatives Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens supports around the world, and here in NE Florida.** JZG is proud to be an accredited member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. For more information, visit jacksonvillezoo.org.