

San Diego Zoo giant panda recovering from surgery

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In this Jan. 21, 2009 file photo released by the San Diego Zoo, the zoo's male giant panda, Gao Gao, eats his birthday cake in San Diego. Gao Gao is recovering from surgery to remove his right testicle due to the presence of a tumor. Zoo officials say the hourlong procedure Tuesday, May 6, 2014 was a success and veterinarians are hopeful Gao Gao will make a full recovery. (AP Photo/San Diego Zoo, Ken Bohn, File)

Gao Gao, one of the San Diego Zoo's giant pandas, is recovering from surgery to remove his right testicle because of the presence of a tumor.

The one-hour procedure Tuesday was a success, and veterinarians are hopeful Gao Gao would make a full recovery, [zoo](#) officials said.

The popular panda could be back on exhibit as early as this weekend.

The Ministry of Forestry for the People's Republic of China was informed about Gao Gao's health and gave approval for the surgery. All of the zoo's pandas are on loan from China.

Gao Gao is estimated to be about 24 years old and is father to five panda cubs born at the San Diego Zoo. It was unclear if he would continue to be part of the panda breeding population.

"For an older male animal who is intact to get a testicular [tumor](#) is not that uncommon," zoo veterinarian Meg Sutherland-Smith told U-T San Diego (bit.ly/1irUJHe).

An ultrasound and biopsies revealed that Gao Gao had the tumor called a seminoma, officials said. The tumor is cancerous, but seminomas are typically not aggressive and generally do not metastasize. He was being treated with analgesics and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medication.

Gao Gao was born in the wild and brought to a rescue center in China in 1992 with bite wounds on his ear. He came to San Diego from China's Wolong Panda Conservation Center in 2003. Gao Gao fathered five of the six zoo cubs born to Bai Yun, who is 22 years old.

The panda parents share the Panda Trek exhibit with their cub Xiao Liwu, who turns 2 in July.

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