

South African rhino named Hope gets facial reconstruction

May 11 2016, by By Christopher Torchia

A year ago, a South African rhino survived a horrific attack by poachers who hacked off her horns and part of her face. This month, the rhino dubbed Hope is undergoing new facial reconstruction to reduce the wound over her exposed sinus cavities.

Wildlife veterinarians have fixed medical elastic bands across the rhino's wound and will assess the results next week. The bands are meant to act like shoelaces, stretching skin on both sides closer together. The equipment, designed for human patients with abdominal wounds, was provided by Canadian company Southmedic through its South African distributor, Surgitech.

"We're confident in the way that it works with human skin, and hoping that the same reaction will happen with the rhino skin," Genna Woodrow, a Southmedic manager, said in a telephone interview from the company's headquarters in Barrie, Ontario.

Often, with a human patient, such elastic bands are left exposed because they are adjusted frequently. However, veterinarians applied a protective dressing to the rhino's wound to keep it clean.

Hope was darted by poachers, who severed her [horns](#) while she was sedated, exposing her [sinus cavities](#) and nasal passage. She has been cared for by Saving the Survivors, a group that treats [rhinos](#) with [gunshot wounds](#) and other poaching injuries.

South Africa, home to most of the world's rhinos, has struggled to curb the slaughter of rhinos, whose horns are coveted in parts of Asia, particularly Vietnam. Some consumers believe the horns have medicinal benefits. There is no evidence to support that: The horn is made of keratin, a protein also found in [human](#) fingernails.

Hope has regrown a small amount of horn since the attack, said Chris du Plessis, product manager at Surgitech. He described it as a "miracle."

More information: savingthesurvivors.org/

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