



PICTURE: HERBERT MATIMBA

ZAZA the leopard sleeps peacefully as Dr Gerhard Steenkamp does a root canal treatment on her fang

Fight-injured leopard gets top dental treatment

HANTI OTTO

PRETORIA: Being involved in a cat fight can leave scars on a girl, even if you are a 12-year-old leopard.

Fortunately Zaza was not left at the mercy of nature and after an operation of an hour-and-a-half on Monday, which included polishing her teeth, she can show off

her flashing grin again.

The leopard was involved in a fight with her sister on the game farm, Shayamanzi, in Limpopo province. Her right fang was broken in the process. A bite to her head, just in front of the ear, also damaged the nerve that controlled the lip muscles.

Dr Gerhard Steenkamp, of the dental clinic at the

University of Pretoria's faculty of veterinary science, said the nerve damage would take about six weeks to heal, but that it would not be problematic as the leopard could still eat.

"As fangs are too long to crown and can easily break again, I did a root canal and sealed the tip of the tooth where it was broken,"

Steenkamp said. "She will still be able to bite with it."

The 50kg cat arrived at the faculty early in the morning. She had to be darted before the experts dared come close to her.

Owner Jannie Parsons said that he had a leopard project on his game farm where the cats were all fitted with GPS collars to

determine their habits.

Zaza and her sister grew up on another farm in Mussina. A few months ago the farm was sold and the leopards were relocated.

"They were used to humans, so we could not release them into the wild. And 12 is very old for leopards in the wild. We decided to keep them in a camp," Parsons said.

