



## Just One of the Animals: Veterinarian performs elephant cataract surgery at N.C. Zoo.

On any given day, **DR. RYAN DEVOE '04 MR** might be performing a physical on a cougar or coordinating emergency care for a baboon with a broken femur. So DeVoe, the senior veterinarian at the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro, N.C., makes a point of building rapport with his patients outside of his veterinarian duties. "I try to do my best to have positive interactions with the animals because a lot of the stuff we do with them from a veterinarian standpoint isn't very pleasant," he says.

Among the recent unpleasant procedures DeVoe performed was surgery on C'sar, the 38-year-old African bull elephant. DeVoe was part of a team that successfully performed cataract surgery on C'sar last year after his vision became so impaired that he could no longer move about his exhibit. C'sar is still farsighted, and although he can now return to his exhibit, DeVoe and zoo officials are considering a procedure to fit C'sar with contact lenses. That would be the first corrective vision contact lens procedure for an African elephant.

Being able to get close to the individual zoo animals is one aspect DeVoe likes about his job. "There are some chimpanzees that I like quite a bit and they like me," he says. "You develop a very close relationship with them in one way or another, and it's almost like they're sort of family after a point." Proudly, he talks of the hope he and his colleagues have for the birth of a rhinoceros or elephant at the zoo someday.

But there is also a human element to DeVoe's work. As an adjunct professor at NC State, he mentors zoological medicine residents participating in the Master of Specialized Veterinary Medicine program. And DeVoe likes having a role in helping zoo visitors better appreciate the natural world.

"You just can't get the same effect from looking at a picture or looking at something on television or on the Internet as you can from getting up close and seeing and hearing and sometimes smelling some of these animals," he says.

—Kathryn Caprino