



MEDIA RELEASE

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Chester Zoo's rhinos get a clean bill of health with breakthrough stethoscope technology

Chester Zoo has achieved a world-first by monitoring and recording the heartbeat of a rhinoceros using the very latest in electronic stethoscope technology.

The newly-launched Littmann stethoscope Model 3200 – from the diversified technology company 3M – is so sensitive that it even works through a rhino's thick protective hide and is helping the zoo to protect one of the world's oldest and most endangered species.

Thanks to the stethoscope's unique on-board Bluetooth technology the zoo's veterinary team can also transfer the heart and lung sounds wirelessly for digital storage and further analysis.

"We can now gather and build up crucial information about the rare Eastern black rhinos and share it with other wildlife professionals worldwide," explained the zoo's resident vet James Chatterton.

"These rhinos have been around for about five million years but they've been reduced to a critically endangered species, with only around 700 remaining in the wild. It's paramount that we learn as much as we can to help protect their health and welfare."

The launch of the Littmann 3200 stethoscope couldn't have come at a better time for the two recent additions to the zoo's nine black rhinos in the park.

Asani, the first Eastern black rhino to be born there in 10 years, celebrated his first birthday in October 2009. And he was joined by the birth of a female calf called Bashira in May.

As Asani and Bashira grow up and develop their hide – which on rhinos can be up to two inches thick – the zoo can continue to record their progress.

The Littmann 3200 electronic stethoscope, which was singled out by Popular Science magazine as the "Innovation of the Year", amplifies sounds by 24 times and reduces background noise by an average of 85 per cent.

It has been primarily developed for use by cardiologists, hospital specialists and GPs on human patients. It will help to minimise the number of "false negative" results, where heart conditions aren't detected, and also "false positives" where patients are unnecessarily referred to a consultant.

Peter Robinson, 3M senior technical services specialist, commented: "There's been considerable interest in this new model from medical professionals and we're delighted that its benefits can be transposed to the equally challenging fields of veterinary and zoological medicine."

And it's not only the rhinos that will be benefiting at the zoo. As James Chatterton added: "If it works that well on a rhino, just imagine how well we can now monitor other animals in our care."

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For information about 3M™ Littmann™ Stethoscopes: www.littmann.co.uk

About Chester Zoo

Chester Zoo is a registered conservation charity and support projects around the world and closer to home in Cheshire. Welcoming 1.4 million visitors a year, it is the largest zoo in the UK; home to 7000 animals, 400 different species, many of which are endangered.

About 3M

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