

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **Caution urged on Tasmanian devil 'resistant' to DFTD**

The Menzies Research Institute has cautioned that it is too early to say that it has found a Tasmanian Devil resistant to Devil Facial Tumour Disease.

The Institute, which is collaborating with the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program, said that no devils from the West Coast or anywhere else have been shown to be resistant to DFTD.

Assistant Professor of Cancer and Immunology at the School of Medicine, Greg Woods, said that one of two devils from the West Coast showed a strong antibody response when challenged with killed tumour cells while the other devil showed no response.

The devil that had responded to the killed tumour was one of the western devils that have been found to have slightly different MHC (major histocompatibility complex) gene expression compared to the tumour itself.

The MHC gene expression of these devils also is different from any eastern devils.

These genes are involved in triggering an immune response in all mammals.

Associate Professor Woods said that research is underway into the possibility that western devils with different MHC expression to eastern devils may produce an immune response to live tumour and may even be able to reject the tumour (i.e. show some resistance).

"All we can say is that the research is underway. It is far too early to talk about a resistant devil," he said.

"It will take many months of further research before we find out whether the western devils with different MHC expression actually have any more resistance to DFTD than any other devils."

For more information, contact: Professor Greg Woods, 0408 264 832

**Information Released by:**

**Media Office, University of Tasmania**

**Phone: 6226 2124 Mobile: 0417 517 291**

**Email: [Media.Office@utas.edu.au](mailto:Media.Office@utas.edu.au)**