

MEDIA RELEASE

NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors



Cedric the devil succumbs to DFTD

A Tasmanian devil, that had given preliminary indications of an immune response to Facial Tumour disease, has succumbed to the disease.

University of Tasmania researchers Associate Professor Greg Woods and Dr Alex Kreiss of the Menzies Research Institute Tasmania said the Tasmanian devil, known as Cedric, was part of ongoing research for the development of a vaccine against DFTD.

In 2007, the Tasmanian devil born in captivity to parents originally from Tasmania's west coast, was immunised with dead DFTD tumour cells and then later challenged with live DFTD tumour cells.

At the time, he showed an immune response to DFTD, which may have initially protected him from the tumour. Cedric was then rechallenged with live DFTD tumour cells to determine if the immunisation had produced long term protection.

"Unfortunately this was not to be the case and in 2008 Cedric, had two small DFTD tumours surgically removed," Associate Professor of Cancer and Immunology Greg Woods said.

"Despite appearing healthy and with no signs of disease for almost two years, a chest x-ray revealed tumour metastasis to his lungs."

"The decision to euthanise him was made last week."

"Cedric has played an important part in helping us to understand more about the disease. He provided hope that an immune response can be generated against DFTD and his recent battle has strengthened our resolve to help the devils defeat this disease" Dr Kreiss said.

"While this death is sad news, it is only one part of the puzzle toward developing a vaccine against DFTD. This was always going to be a long and

difficult task, but the information that Cedric supplied has provided clues for alternative immunisation strategies.”

Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Director of Policy and Projects Howel Williams said while the death of the Tasmanian devil was disappointing, it was important to recognise the research is one aspect of a number of initiatives in place to assist the survival of the wild population.

“The Save the Tasmanian Devil Program has always recognised that we are dealing with a complex disease that can’t rely on single responses to it,” Mr Williams said.

“That is why the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program has focussed on developing a range of measures that have been and continue to be implemented. These include measures such as building an insurance population that relies on a range of methods of housing them, isolating wild populations to help break the transmission cycle, disease suppression and other measures.”

Facial Tumour Disease has caused a major decline in the wild population of Tasmanian devils with the species now listed as Endangered. The disease has been recorded across more than 60 per cent of the State in the wild.

The University of Tasmania is working in partnership with the State and Federal governments through the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program to help the survival of Tasmanian Devils.

This program is supported by public funding through the Save the Tasmanian Devil Program Appeal. For more information: www.tassiedevil.com.au