



## Peter Emily International Veterinary Dental Foundation

"Providing for the dental needs of disadvantaged animals worldwide."

Contact: Susanne Pilla  
Tel.: 303-355-7688  
Email: [pilla.s@peteremilyfoundation.org](mailto:pilla.s@peteremilyfoundation.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### IN THE MOUTHS OF LIONS

Godfather of Animal Dentistry Expands His Private Foundation's Mission to Bring Badly Needed Veterinary Dental Services to Animals in the US and Abroad

**Lakewood, CO, March 20, 2007** -- Most people, and in fact even well-trained professionals, aren't aware of the dangers lurking inside the mouths of the world's four-legged and feathered beings. Dr. Peter Emily is widely known as the "grandfather" of animal dentistry – or sometimes "Godfather", due to his Italian heritage. He has made it his life's mission to educate layman and professionals about the need for veterinary dental care in both wild and domesticated animals. It's not about giving Ol' Rex or a wild boar a nice set of pearly whites – it's about identifying potentially deadly and often painful problems. If left untreated, these problems can lead to much more serious health issues.

Not that Dr. Emily hasn't given his fair share of lions and tigers and bears a smile-worthy polish. Many veterinarians and captive animal facilities understand the importance of regular dental care. Siegfried & Roy, The Denver Zoo, and veterinary hospitals around the world have called upon Dr. Emily to perform root canals, beak repairs and a variety of other dental procedures most people think only humans require.

Even captive exotic animals in the most well-appointed zoos can suffer from "zoochosis" to some degree – an abnormal psychotic behavior often manifested by pacing and cage-biting. Though they look frighteningly big, the teeth of many animals just aren't that strong compared to the biting force of the animals' jaws. The cage is bitten and a tooth is broken, often resulting in the extremely painful exposure of the tooth's root. Every breath, every brush of the tongue, every drink of water, is painful. Add to that the inability to verbalize what is wrong. All they can do is pace and act out more as the pain intensifies and the problem compounds. The mouth is central to blood flow in the body. Even in domesticated animals, the infection caused by an untended broken canine often leads to serious systemic health problems. Infected teeth often abscess, leading to external swelling.

Dr. Emily's road to animal dentistry began at a young age. Growing up in a predominantly Italian working class Denver neighborhood, Emily knew he wanted to be a dentist from the time he was about 10 years old. After serving in the military during the Korean War as a fighter jet mechanic, Emily returned home to Denver and entered Regis University for his undergraduate education. After Regis, he earned his DDS from Creighton University in Nebraska, and his Certificate of Periodontology from the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Emily later went on to receive his post-graduate certification in Pediatric Dentistry, Endodontics, Oral Surgery and Restorative/Prosthetic Dentistry from the Dental Division of Denver General Hospital, and later a clinical veterinary certification.

Not long after his return to Denver, Dr. Emily became involved in breeding and raising Doberman Pinschers. As he became more involved in the world of dog shows, he became aware of dental issues such as missing teeth which would prevent a dog from finishing. "I developed an X-ray technique to identify the existence of tooth buds in 3-month old puppies to avoid disqualification for missing teeth," he says. Using his knowledge of human dentistry and research into canine oral structure, the performance of root canals on dogs soon followed. Word spread around town about "the animal dentist", and soon The Denver Zoo called – Chip the hyena needed a root canal. Not long after, Silver the Siberian became a patient of Dr. Emily. "From there, it just snowballed," Emily says.

- continued next page -



**Peter Emily International  
Veterinary Dental Foundation**  
"Providing for the dental needs of disadvantaged animals worldwide."

Page 2

Dr. Emily has worked on just about every kind of animal there is – from seals, sea lions and otters, to dik-diks, rhinos, and elephants. Add to that monkeys, bears, wild dogs, and kangaroos, to name just a few. Dr. Emily has also examined the teeth of champion horses Seattle Slew and Secretariat. Emily recalls, "in the early days, we had to be creative, because the existing equipment used in human dentistry didn't work well for many large animals." Many years ago, he improvised using the hydraulic tailgate of a large pick-up truck to raise the head of a 1500-pound polar bear, and performed the root canal on his hands and knees.

Need led to research, innovation and invention – Dr. Emily has developed many of the veterinary dentistry tools used today for procedures on everything from Pekinese to polar bears. In 1990, Dr. Emily, along with Susanna Penman, authored the first "how-to" book on animal dentistry, the "Handbook of *Small Animal Dentistry*." This was followed by a 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, as well as co-authorship with Colin Harvey in 1993 of the text "Small Animal Dentistry". He has also published numerous articles in many professional and layman's journals.

Dr. Emily has lectured to veterinary groups and dog clubs around the world, including Brazil, China, New Zealand, Europe, and Japan. Dr. Emily and several colleagues labored for nearly a decade to create an academy that would provide accredited veterinary dentistry training for DVM candidates. In 1987 the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry was formed, followed soon after by the College of Veterinary Dentistry, which both exist today with members and students from all over the world.

In early 2005, the Peter Emily International Veterinary Dental Foundation (PEIVDF) was established through a donation of funds from Dr. Emily. The PEIVDF is working to expand the veterinary dental knowledge of caretaker and veterinary staff. At its current funding level, the Foundation awards three annual working grants for achievements in dental care for Disadvantaged Small Animals, Disadvantaged Zoo and Wild Animals, and Equines.

The PEIVDF is actively working toward expanding its mission, to include a program they call "Veterinary Dentists Without Borders". Through this program, the Foundation will travel to animal facilities throughout the world to perform necessary veterinary dental procedures, as well as providing training in veterinary dental care to existing staff.

To springboard the PEIVDF on its way toward achieving its expanded mission, the prestigious Western Veterinary Conference (WVC) will hold the first annual fundraiser to benefit the PEIVDF, during its conference in October 18-21, 2007 in Minneapolis.

The Peter Emily International Veterinary Dental Foundation (PEIVDF) was formed in 2005, to provide for the dental needs of disadvantaged animals worldwide.

###

For more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Dr. Emily, please call Susanne Pilla at (303) 355-7688, or e-mail Susanne at [pilla.s@peteremilyfoundation.org](mailto:pilla.s@peteremilyfoundation.org), or visit the website at: [www.peteremilyfoundation.org](http://www.peteremilyfoundation.org)