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## Panther From Tallahassee Museum Undergoes Groundbreaking Procedure

The Tallahassee Museum's male Florida panther recently underwent an innovative stem cell procedure that could potentially help heal a problem in his leg and also help big cats with injuries worldwide.

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The Tallahassee Museum's male Florida panther recently underwent an innovative stem cell procedure that could potentially help heal a problem in his leg and also help big cats with injuries worldwide.

"This treatment is the first known attempt of its kind in a panther in the United States and the gradual results are closely being monitored by the panther's vet and Museum staff," said Tallahassee Museum Animal Curator Mike Jones. "The Museum is appreciative of the opportunity to participate in this cutting edge process that will hopefully help our panther as well as help pave the way for this technique to help other large cats."

During the treatment, Dr. Norm Griggs of Shepherds Spring Animal Hospital, the consulting veterinarian, removed about two ounces of belly fat from the cat. The fat was then air shipped to a firm in California where it was broken down and approximately 33 million stem cells were isolated and saved. The stem cells were then flown back to Tallahassee where Dr. Griggs carefully injected about eight million cells directly into the panther's front right elbow. The remaining cells are being stored in California for backup procedures, if needed. The entire process took 72 hours to complete.

The goal of the stem cell transplant is to grow cartilage in the panther's leg in order to provide relief. The two-year-old cat arrived at the Museum last April with preexisting arthritis in his right elbow and a stick fracture caused by an injury when he was a year old. When veterinarian Dr. Griggs recommended looking into a stem cell transplant to possibly provide relief to the cat, a stem cell therapy company called Vet-Stem was contacted. After reviewing the panther's information, Vet-Stem felt he was such a good fit for this procedure that they agreed to waive most of the costs and proceed. Cat Life Foundation is providing the remaining funds to cover the cost. This procedure has mostly been used on horses and dogs in the past.

About the Tallahassee Museum:

Set amidst 52 acres of breathtaking Florida flora and fauna, the Tallahassee Museum has served as an iconic Tallahassee landmark for more than 50 years. Ranked as one of Florida's top museums, the Museum encourages guests to discover and learn about North Florida's natural environment, rich history and diverse communities. The Museum's living exhibits of native Florida wildlife in their natural environment, nature trails and native gardens are renowned by visitors of all ages. The Museum's Big Bend Farm immerses museum-goers in a 19th century farm experience, while exhibits in the Concord one-room schoolhouse; Seaboard Airline Caboose; Bethlehem Missionary Baptist church; and Bellevue, a mid-19th century cotton plantation, explore the history of Southern communities. Daily programs, annual events, free parking, a museum store and the Trail Break Café make the Museum a favored destination for over 100,000 annual visitors. The Tallahassee Museum is a not-for-profit, funded by private donations, grants, sponsorships, membership and fundraisers.