## TOBY'S BAD LUCK ... By Chris Moshosho

Following on from our June edition, it is hard to believe how much bad luck Toby has had since his initial release into the wild. http://www.africat.org/newsletters/2011/june.html



In April 2011, he had to be brought in after an injury to his right eye, which recovered well and Toby was able to go back to hunting again. However, on 24th October 2011, Toby was found again with a teary eye and this time it was his left eye. He was darted and brought back to AfriCat's Carnivore Care Centre, with the piece of thorn still stuck inside his cornea. It was carefully removed - two pieces of one of our invader thorn-bushes - the Dichrostachys cinerea - more commonly

known as the 'sickle bush'.

Note from Dr Gerhard Steenkamp after viewing images of Toby's second injury:

"There was a penetrating corneal foreign body in Toby's left eye. Around this foreign body there was oedema (that is the 'blueish' opaque discoloration around the thorn). The foreign body was removed and was a thorn of the *Dichrostachys cinerea* bush. The thorn luckily only penetrated very shallow and none of the deeper structures of the eye was damaged."













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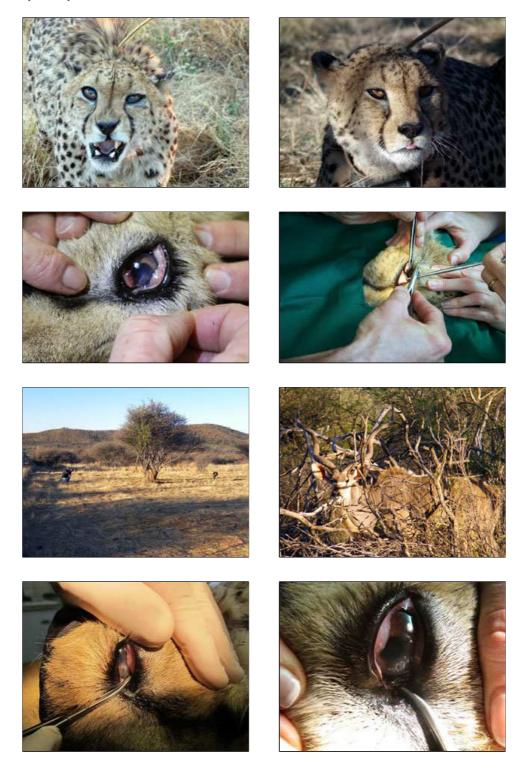
Because of injuries in both eyes, Toby will not be able to hunt successfully and be the independent hunter he once was; he is back in captivity to be monitored closely.

Bush encroachment is a problem in the Okonjima Reserve, as it is across the country, because of damage caused to the land by a combination of farmers over-stocking their land and failed farming methods, a lack of natural bush-fires and many years of low rainfall. This is now the environment where the cheetah, who is a sprinter - has to hunt to survive. The Cheetahs' speed and binocular vision gives them the ability to spot prey from afar before giving chase, which, in perfect conditions gives them an advantage over their competitors. They therefore prefer open plains without the visual and physical obstructions of thick bush/acacias. A more open habitat also gives them a chance to

spot predators like lions and leopard sneaking up on them and killing them.

Toby was following his natural instincts and would not have known better than to give chase to prey which unfortunately led to both his eye injuries. His misfortune was a combination of bad luck and bush encroachment.

READ MORE ABOUT OCULAR ABNORMALITIES OF CHEETAH EXAMINED AT AFRICAT BY DR GARY BAUER GA, BVSC, DRMEDVET(OPHTH).



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