



**'FROSTY' THE SNOW LEOPARD BARES HIS FANGS FOR THE PHOTOGRAPHER**  
... the prolific cat is the zoo's 'best breeder' but has back problems

## Rare cat has back problems

By A News

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By MARJORIE CLAPP  
MEDICAL WRITER

An aging Snow leopard that has been the San Antonio Zoo's most prolific father has a back problem and is no longer able to breed.

"Frosty" has sired at least 20 offspring but now has trouble walking and seems to be in considerable pain.

Dr. Kenneth Fletcher, the zoo's veterinarian, wasn't sure what the problem was until the animal was tested at Medical Center Hospital.

That's right. The zoo health center doesn't have the sophisticated equipment needed to study the spinal cord and nerve roots.

So the leopard was anesthetized, put in a box and taken to the hospital. Dr. Donald Chakeres, head of neuroradiology, did the test on the animal like he does on people.

"He didn't let out a single meow and was more cooperative than most of our human patients," the physician said.

"Of course, I've never treated a cat before, but it looks to me like he's got degenerative disc disease just like old people have. If he were human, I'd say he'll need surgery," he said.

That's exactly what Fletcher plans on next month. Surgery to help relieve the back problem will be done at the zoo, but the vet will be assisted by a local physician who does back surgery on people.

Frosty, you see, is pretty special because he's "the best breeder" of the snow leopards at the zoo, according to Russell Smith, general curator.

Snow leopards are rare and may well become extinct within the next couple of decades, Smith explained.

And that's the main reason Frosty is so important.

He lived in the wild until he was trapped in the Soviet Union and was shipped to the zoo here in 1970. Since

The animal is 15 years old, old for a leopard, but there are now cubs at the zoo that Frosty sired.

Of course, he's out of commission now. While awaiting surgery, he's penned up at the zoo health center. "He can walk, but he'd prefer not because it's obviously very uncomfortable," Smith said.

Will the operation renew his best in the opposite sex?

At this point, Fletcher doesn't know. "It just depends on how much damage has been done," he said.

He added that even if Frosty performs, his sperm can be collected and then used to impregnate a female.

"After all, he's very valuable. We need to transmit his genes," Fletcher said.

In the meantime before the surgery, the zoo will be sent a bill from the hospital for services rendered to the leopard.