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## KIVI-TV TODAY'S 6 NEWS

### **Bear Shot In The Face Receives Surgery**



GARDEN CITY, IDAHO --

Tucked underneath a blue surgical cloth, his little paw poking out from underneath, a 3-year-old black bear goes under the knife to receive reconstructive surgery.

Nick-named "Jaws" because part of his is missing, the 150-pound bear was shot in the face last summer near Stanley, Idaho.

A Boise veterinarian removed shrapnel from the wound a few months back, but caretakers wanted to hold off on surgery until the bear started hibernating.

"We're hoping because his body metabolism is slower that he'll not bother it and lay there quietly," said bear specialist John Beecham, who recently retired from Fish & Game.

Jaws was taken to Idaho Black Bear Rehab last August after being trapped near a campsite.

The bullet in his cheek knocked out a couple of teeth and left a hole in his nasal cavity. The hole was getting food and other debris in it, causing the bear to get a lot of nasal infections, said Dr. Jeff Brouman who performed the surgery.

Surgeons at WestVet Emergency and Specialty Center stretched skin from the bear's cheek to cover the hole. The operation took about two hours, and 40 stitches were used.

"The biggest challenge for recovery is that he is a bear and when he wakes up he doesn't know what's going on. So he may try to paw at his incision," Brouman said.

But making sure the wound heals well enough is key to the bear's survival.

"It's make it or break it for him because you can't release him like that," said Sally Maughan at Idaho Black Bear Rehab.

Maughan admits Jaws has won her over during his stay with her, but she is determined to return him to the wild.

"They can set aside their wild instincts long enough to trust and get the help. But the moment they don't need it anymore, it's back to being a bear," she said.

If everything goes well, Jaws will remain in his semi-hibernating state until March. His caretakers hope to release him into the wild when hunting season is over in May.

Doctors say the next two weeks will be critical in determining whether the bear heals successfully.

