

Gorilla's toothache

A medical team including three dentists extracted a tooth from a gorilla after the 300 lb ape called KoKo used sign language to tell her handlers she had toothache.

According to the story, reported in the *Independent* newspaper, KoKo who lives at the Gorilla Foundation in Woodside, California, began pointing at her mouth and using the American sign language for pain. As the discomfort became more intense she was able to point repeatedly to the nine and ten markers on a pain chart with a scale of one to ten. The medical team was then able to extract the offending tooth.

KoKo is the most adept of several primates at the Gorilla Foundation who have been taught sign language. She has mastered more than 1,000 signs, says her chief handler and teacher Penny Patterson. ■