Veterinarians from the Oklahoma State University Center for Veterinary Health Sciences recently traveled to the Oklahoma City Zoo on two separate occasions to assist with the birth of two litters of African lion cubs.

On Sunday, Nov. 4, Small Animal Surgeons Drs. Jude Bordelon, Kristy Broaddus and Brent Newcomb, were summoned by zoo officials to help Tia, a first-time mother lion, deliver her cubs.

“When we arrived at the Oklahoma City Zoo, staff had the lion anesthetized, on the table and ready for us,” recalls Dr. Broaddus. “All we had to do was drape in and perform the surgery, which is very similar to a dog or cat C-section.”

As soon as Drs. Bordelon and Broaddus would deliver the cubs, they would hand them off to a

team of zoo animal caretakers, veterinary staff and curators.

“They would dry the cubs, suction their airways, and make sure they were breathing,” explains Dr. Broaddus. “They also wanted to keep them warm much the same as you would any newborn.”

Of the four cubs, two survived. On Tuesday, Nov. 6, Drs. Bordelon and Newcomb returned to the Oklahoma City Zoo along with Dr. Zach Ricker to perform another c-section on Bridget, also a first-time mom, as she gave birth to three cubs, two of which survived.

The cubs were able to eat the same nights they were born. All the lion cubs are being bottle-fed and hand-raised since they were not born naturally and risk being rejected by their mothers.

“We really enjoy working with the staff at the Oklahoma City Zoo,” says Dr. Broaddus. “It’s not every day you have an opportunity to work on a lion. It’s exciting and fun.”

For more information on the lion cubs, visit the KFOR Cub Cam at http://www.kfor.com . For information regarding the Oklahoma City Zoo, contact Tara Henson at (405) 919-9038 or (405) 425-0219.