

Rebellious rodent draws first blood in encounter with boa constrictor

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PRETORIA: The food chain was temporarily disrupted when a rat refused to become easy meat and attacked the snake that was supposed to eat it.

The young, 1.5-metre female red-tailed boa constrictor was bitten about 10 times, with some of the wounds so deep that her vertebrae could be seen.

She is now being treated at the Bird and Exotic Animal Hospital at the Faculty of Veterinary Science at the University of Pretoria, and is clearly feeling sorry for herself.

The beautiful patterns on her body have been spoilt by the white plaster patches used to cover her wounds.

The boa constrictor apparently did not have much of a chance against the rodent.

A rat can kill a snake, says Dorianne Elliot, a vet at the hospital.

"The snake cannot defend itself and will try to hide from the rat," she said.

Incidents like this happened when a live rat was put in a reptile's quarters when the snake was not yet hungry.

The rat would wander around, with the snake not doing anything to it.

But this rat decided not to wait until the snake wanted to make a meal of it, apparently taking the view that attack was its best form of defence.

"The snake is in for long treatment," Elliot said.

Meanwhile, the rat has got away with its life.

Its whereabouts are unknown.

