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News Release

For Immediate Release

Zoo staff saddened by elephant death



Hearts are heavy today at Dickerson Park Zoo as the staff mourns the death of the elephant "Connie," known locally to the public as "Pinky."

In August, the zoo announced Connie's health was declining because of advancing kidney disease. At that time, her weight fluctuated between 6,200 and 6,500 pounds. Connie's condition rapidly declined in recent days. During the past week, her weight dramatically decreased to 5,600-5,700 pounds.

Late Friday afternoon, she lay down, too weak to stand. In the presence of zookeepers who cared for her every day, the zoo's veterinarian humanely euthanized Connie. Connie was estimated to be 50 years old; the median life expectancy for an elephant cow is 46.9 years.

"We have been fortunate through the years to celebrate Connie as we cared for her through pregnancies and birth," says Mike Crocker, Assistant Parks Director for the Zoo. "This is a difficult time for our staff. For most of our staff members, Connie has been at Dickerson Park Zoo for their entire career."

The zoo's veterinarian will conduct a necropsy (animal autopsy) to further investigate the cause of Connie's death. The veterinarian will be assisted by Dickerson Park Zoo's animal care staff and a veterinary pathologist and veterinary students from the University of Missouri. While preliminary necropsy results will be known this week, pathology reports will not be finalized for some time.

Connie came to Dickerson Park Zoo in November 1981 from the Abilene, Texas, Zoological Gardens. She was wild-born and became an important part of Dickerson Park Zoo's internationally recognized elephant management program through the 1980s and 90s. Her first pregnancy, in 1985, resulted in stillborn calf. Her second calf, Kate, was born in 1991, and died in 1993 from what was later identified as the elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV). Her third calf, Asha, was born in February 1995; Asha resides at Oklahoma City Zoo.

For the past several years, Connie has been the matriarch of Dickerson Park Zoo's elephant herd, assuming those responsibilities from Ol' C.C., who relinquished the duties of matriarch as her health declined. C.C. died in 2010, at an estimated age of 61. Connie continued to be the herd's matriarch through her final days, even as her health declined.

Members of the public wishing to express words of support to her zookeepers can send an email to zookeeper@dickersonparkzoo.org or post on the [zoo's Facebook page](#).

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