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News Release

For Immediate Release

Test Results on Giraffe Deaths Summarized

Dickerson Park Zoo has completed summaries of necropsy reports on two unrelated giraffe deaths which occurred earlier this summer.

On June 2, a 10-year-old male giraffe arrived at Dickerson Park Zoo. The giraffe had difficulty unloading from the trailer, eventually falling to the ground. Zookeepers worked with the giraffe for nearly two hours, and after significant effort, the giraffe stood on his own. However, it was evident the animal had a severe neck injury, and he was euthanized. Given the nature and severity of the injury the zoo’s staff veterinarian determined the likelihood of rehabilitating this injury was extremely poor due to the type of equipment and medication required for daily care and the overall skittish nature of giraffes.

During the necropsy (animal autopsy), the zoo’s staff veterinarian determined the giraffe suffered severe blunt force trauma to the neck, most likely self-induced, which occurred during the time after departing from the previous institution and before he stood up at Dickerson Park Zoo. The blunt force caused severe subluxation (partial dislocation of a bone or joint) to several regions of the neck and severe muscle bruising.

A giraffe born on June 30 died on July 3 after a difficult beginning. The calf was a breech birth, was unable to stand unassisted and did not nurse from her mother. The necropsy indicated systemic congestion (the accumulation of fluid and blood), particularly of the rumen (multi-chambered stomach) and kidneys, and severe fat atrophy. Additionally, there was swelling of the brain and spinal cord. Lab results indicate the majority of the contributing factors that led to this giraffe’s death occurred while in utero.

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