



Cameron Park Zoological  
& Botanical Society, Inc.

1703 North 4th Street  
Waco, Texas 76707

**ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS &  
AQUARIUMS**  
Member of



**Contact: Terri Cox – 254-744-4871**  
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### **Komodo dragon Hatchlings at Cameron Park Zoo**

**Waco, Texas** - Cameron Park Zoo is excited to announce the successful hatching of two Komodo dragons. While all animal births are exciting, these Komodo dragons are especially interesting, because they were possibly hatched via a process called parthenogenesis. A parthenogenetic egg needs no fertilization from a male because it inherits and duplicates the mother's chromosome. Based on the Komodo dragon's genetics of sex determination, hatchlings reproduced in this way will always be male. The mother Komodo dragon, Neoma, has never been housed with Cameron Park Zoo's male Komodo dragon, Thurber, although they are housed in neighboring enclosures. It is highly unlikely that the two climbed the wire mesh between them for breeding purposes, but to rule out that possibility the zoo is attempting to send DNA samples out for testing.

Cameron Park Zoo's female Komodo dragon, Neoma, was hatched at the San Antonio Zoo. The male, Thurber, was hatched via parthenogenesis at Sedgewick Country Zoo, Wichita Kansas in 2008 and was the first documented parthenogenesis in Komodo dragons in the United States. The London Zoo and the Chester Zoo in the UK were the first and second zoos to document parthenogenesis in Komodo dragons. It is quite possible that Waco will document the fourth incident of parthenogenesis in captive Komodo dragons.

Hatched August 29<sup>th</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup>, the baby Komodo dragons are currently called "number one" and "number two" based on the order in which they hatched, but Zoo officials will post names for public voting on their Facebook page. Visitors can view the babies in the Herpetarium, where they will alternate being on public display. These little lizards may look cute and harmless now, but they will one day grow to be one of the largest and most dangerous lizards on the planet. Komodo dragons have a forked tongue like their mythical namesake and they are notoriously fierce carnivores. Their mouth contains 60 teeth and bacteria that will eventually cause septicemia in the prey that it bites. There is also speculation by some scientists that Komodo dragons also possess venom.

Komodo dragons are the largest carnivorous lizards in the world and they exist only on four small Indonesian islands, part of the Pacific Ocean's "Rim of Fire." They are considered to be severely endangered in their natural habitat. The remaining population of Komodo dragons is speculated to be as few as 5,000 animals that are vulnerable to disease, volcanic activity, and competition with feral dogs and man.

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