



## Cameron Park Zoo Determines Causes of Giraffe Losses

**WACO, TEXAS (October 12, 2023)** – After receiving finalized reports from outside laboratories and specialists in zoo animal pathology, the Cameron Park Zoo has learned the cause of death for the giraffes, Penelope and Zuri. Based on the pathology report for Penelope, it appears the primary issue was muscle trauma in the form of exertional rhabdomyolysis (the common term for this condition is capture myopathy). This condition is characterized by a breakdown of muscle tissue. It can lead to changes in the levels of metabolites in the blood, muscle stiffness, weakness, kidney failure, and cardiac arrest in severe cases. Despite medical treatment, Penelope's condition rapidly led to difficulty transitioning from lying down to standing up. In large animals such as giraffes, the inability to stand can lead to a multitude of issues, including further muscle damage, aspiration of stomach contents, and gastrointestinal disease. Capture myopathy is usually associated with stress and severe physical exertion. It is unknown what caused the condition. Animal care staff at the Cameron Park Zoo did not witness any stressful behavior that was significant enough to explain the muscle trauma in the days leading up to her death. The findings on Zuri indicate there was an infection of the gastrointestinal tract, which spread to her bloodstream, causing sepsis. Even with aggressive medical treatment, this infection reached the lungs, causing pneumonia and shock. Stress was a possible contributing factor and may have been linked to the loss of her mother and the transition to being bottle-fed.

Dr. James Kusmierczyk, staff veterinarian for the Cameron Park Zoo, shared, "The Cameron Park Zoo is still mourning the loss of Penelope and Zuri, but this information helps us understand what we were dealing with. It gives me comfort knowing that we provided the best medical care we could under the circumstances. Giraffes are always challenging to treat due to their size and unique physiology. I hope that this information may contribute to the growing body of knowledge about their care."

The Cameron Park Zoo sincerely appreciates the support and care from the community during this time. We thank our dedicated staff for their exceptional animal care and management.

The Masai giraffe is the largest species of giraffe and can be found in Central and Southern Kenya, as well as in Tanzania. They are known for their distinct and irregular star-like blotches that extend to their hooves. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the global authority on the conservation status of wild animals and plants, lists Masai giraffes as endangered, primarily due to poaching and habitat fragmentation.

For more information about the Cameron Park Zoo and the Zoological & Botanical Society, visit [www.cameronparkzoo.com](http://www.cameronparkzoo.com)

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