



August 31, 2023

SENECA PARK ZOO MASAI GIRAFFE BIOPSY RESULTS

Seneca Park Zoo's Masai giraffe Kipenzi biopsy results reveal growth is a squamous cell carcinoma

ROCHESTER, NY — Seneca Park Zoo's female Masai giraffe, known to the public as Kipenzi, underwent a procedure on August 15, 2023, to biopsy a growth on her jaw. The growth was observed by staff in late spring 2023 and has been monitored closely by Animal Health and Animal Care teams. The biopsy was sent to the Cornell Animal Health Diagnostic Lab for testing, and results reveal that the growth is a type of cancer called squamous cell carcinoma and is invasive through the jaw bone.

"Given the location of the tumor within the bone of the jaw, there is no way to remove it without compromising Kipenzi's ability to eat and ruminate, or chew cud," said **Seneca Park Zoo Veterinarian Dr. Chris McKinney**. "The prognosis is poor. This type of tumor is rare in giraffes, but in the few cases reported, the cancer spreads into the lymph nodes. Kipenzi is currently doing very well and does not require any medication. She is showing no signs of discomfort and is eating well."

Dr. McKinney, Animal Health teams, and the giraffe keepers will continue to monitor Kipenzi closely, documenting any changes with the tumor or in her behavior. Keepers will monitor her appetite daily and report any decrease in the amounts she eats. Weekly exams and weights will track the way Kipenzi holds her jaw and chews as well as determine if she is losing weight. As the tumor continues to grow it can begin to damage to roots of her teeth, so Kipenzi will have x-rays taken of the area once a month to evaluate for internal changes and whether her teeth are being affected.

"This monitoring will help us to determine if she is in pain from the growth of the tumor. If we see concerning changes, we can use pain medications to keep her comfortable," says **Dr. McKinney**. "Unfortunately, this tumor will grow to a point that it causes severe pain in her jaw and prevents her from being able to eat. If we are seeing signs that Kipenzi is in pain and medications are not helping her, then we will have to make the difficult decision for euthanasia to prevent her from suffering."

"Kipenzi is a sweet-tempered, beloved member of the Seneca Park Zoo community who has inspired so many of our children and families to care more about Masai giraffes and the wonders of the natural world," said **Monroe County Executive Adam Bello**. "Sadly, these biopsy results are not what we were hoping for, but I know the zoo's dedicated and compassionate animal care team will continue to do all they can to ensure she remains comfortable and does not suffer. I am grateful to all Zoo staff for the exceptional care they provide Kipenzi and all the animals at our Zoo, and encourage the community to keep the Zoo care team in their thoughts as they navigate this difficult time."

“Zoo staff, Animal Care, and Animal Health teams are obviously devastated at this news. We will continue to provide world-class care to ensure Kipenzi is not suffering,” **said Seneca Park Zoo Superintendent Steve Lacy.** “ We ask the public for your continued support. Come to the Zoo and see Kipenzi. Keep her and Zoo staff in your thoughts and prayers.”

Internationally, and in our own backyard, Seneca Park Zoo plays a key role in species survival. Chartered as an educational institution in 1957 by New York State, the Seneca Park Zoo Society plays an integral role in supporting Monroe County, the owners and operators of the Zoo. Together, we are working to bring animals back from the brink of extinction.

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