



**For Immediate Release:
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SENECA PARK ZOO ANNOUNCES LOSS OF NEWBORN GIRAFFE CALF BORN WITH LEG PARALYSIS

Rochester, NY – The Seneca Park Zoo today announced that Kura, the Zoo’s four-year-old female Masai giraffe, delivered a calf in the early morning hours of June 17th. Under normal circumstances, giraffe calves are on their feet quickly after birth; in this case, animal care and animal health staff reviewed video footage and monitored the calf for several hours, and noted it was not able to stand. As a result, Zoo Animal Health made the humane decision to euthanize the calf due to paralysis of the left rear leg.

“We could see the calf was incapable of standing on its own, and we determined the calf had nerve damage causing paralysis,” stated Zoo Veterinarian Chris McKinney. “Because it was a nerve and not a musculoskeletal injury there was not a way to splint the leg, and the prognosis was fatal. In addition, the calf was underweight, which may indicate there were other issues as well.”

While there is no way to confirm, Dr. McKinney stated that nerve damage can be caused by positioning in the uterus or can occur during the birth process.

Dr. McKinney added, “Giraffe births have inherent risks, especially with first time moms. The risk of a newborn giraffe calf not surviving is close to 50%. This can be due to birth defects, injury, or disease.” “We knew there was a chance Kura was pregnant when she was transferred to Seneca Park Zoo. She was very young to be pregnant, and with first-time giraffe pregnancies, it can be difficult to tell,” said McKinney. “Kura was not yet comfortable with procedures like ultrasounds, so confirming a pregnancy would have been quite stressful for her. We instead used observation to determine she was likely carrying a calf.”

As it became clear she was pregnant, Kura was monitored closely by Animal Health and Animal Care teams for any changes in behavior and appetite. She also received a diet higher in calories and calcium than the normal giraffe diet.

“Kura is back with the tower and is receiving exceptional care from our expert Animal Care and Animal Health teams,” **said Zoo Director Bob Lee**. “The teams are carefully monitoring her health and well-being, and she is behaving normally and doing well.”

Kura was transferred to the Zoo in the fall of 2024 on a recommendation from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) cooperatively managed Species Survival Plan® (SSP) Program. Masai giraffes are found in savannas and open woodlands throughout southern Kenya and much of Tanzania. They are classified as Endangered by the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), due to fragmented populations that have resulted from poaching, habitat loss, and human encroachment. Seneca Park Zoo has been a part of the AZA Giraffe SAFE (Saving Animals from Extinction) program since its inception and has supported field conservation work for giraffes since 2018 when giraffes became a permanent part of the Zoo. Seneca Park Zoo is presently home for five Masai giraffe.

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.