

Pathologists Conclude Niabi Zoo Giraffe Calf Died of Lung Disorder

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Coal Valley, IL – August 28, 2013 – Pathologists at the University of Illinois have reached a conclusion about what most likely caused the August 13 Niabi Zoo’s newborn female giraffe calf. A necropsy (animal autopsy) was performed at the University of Illinois’ College of Veterinary Medicine to determine the cause of death.

After extensively studying internal organs, tissue samples, fluid samples, and bacterial cultures, pathologists have concluded that the cause of death was likely a lung disorder similar to Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome (NRDS) in humans. Neonatal Respiratory Distress Syndrome is mainly caused by lack of surfactant, a slippery, protective substance which helps the lungs inflate with air and prevents them from collapsing after exhalation. While pathologists are unable to say with absolute certainty that NRDS was the cause of death, all tests and examinations seem to indicate a problem very similar to it.

The giraffe calf was born to one of Niabi Zoo’s adult female giraffes, Mimi, but died approximately 3 hours after birth. The calf experienced apparent breathing troubles a few hours after birth and Niabi Zoo staff attempted to assist her.

Unfortunately she passed away soon thereafter. “We’re sad to have lost her,” said Zoo Director Marc Heinzman, “but the entire zoo staff welcomes the feeling of closure that comes with learning why she is gone.”

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