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Contacts:
Kris Sherman, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or kris.sherman@pdza.org
Whitney DalBalcon, Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org
Sarah Floyd, Tulsa Zoo Management, Inc., 918-669-6639 or sfloyd@tulsazoo.org

ENDANGERED MALAYAN TIGER CUB IN POOR CONDITION FOLLOWING EMERGENCY SURGERY
Veterinary staff providing round-the-clock care for 6-month-old tiger who became ill on Monday

TACOMA, Wash. – Berani, an endangered Malayan tiger cub at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, is in poor but stable condition today following emergency surgery Monday night.

The 6-month-old tiger is in "acute respiratory distress," and is sedated, said Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium General Curator Karen Goodrowe Beck. He is receiving intensive care from a team of zoo veterinarians, with consultation from outside veterinary specialists.

The cause of his initial illness is undetermined, and the veterinary team is working to determine what caused him to fall ill.

Berani became lethargic, would not eat and developed a sudden high fever Monday afternoon, Goodrowe Beck said.

Zookeepers immediately called zoo veterinarians, who took X-rays and performed an ultrasound, checking for a possible intestinal blockage.

“To be cautious, the veterinary team performed an exploratory surgery late Monday,” Goodrowe Beck said.

“There was no blockage, but his gastrointestinal tract appears to be very, very irritated,” said Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf. “We believe there may be an infectious process going on, but we’re still investigating the root cause of his illness. Following surgery, he developed acute respiratory distress, and we are keeping him sedated and on oxygen therapy.”

“Our veterinary and zoological staff are working around the clock to care for Berani,” Goodrowe Beck said.

Four veterinarians, a veterinary technician and multiple other staff members attended the 74-pound cub through the surgery. Staff kept watch and cared for him through the night.

Berani, born Aug. 26 of last year, came to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium from The Tulsa Zoo in October to be raised with Dumai, a Sumatran tiger cub born just four days before Berani.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium staff members are in close contact with officials at The Tulsa Zoo to keep them informed about Berani’s condition and care.

“We are saddened by the news of Berani’s sudden health decline, but we are confident that he is receiving the best veterinary care at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium’s state-of-the-art veterinary facility,” said Joe Barkowski, Vice President of Animal Conservation & Science at The Tulsa Zoo. “We care for Berani as he is one of our own and our thoughts are with Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium during this time.”

Both cubs were single births. Neither was thriving, and each needed hand-rearing to ensure adequate nutrition. A mother who is inattentive or lacks adequate milk is not an uncommon occurrence with single-cub litters, said Goodrowe Beck, who also is coordinator of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums’ Species Survival Plan® for Sumatran tigers.

Species Survival Plan® officials for both Malayan and Sumatran tigers determined it would be best for the cubs to be raised together, so they could learn tiger behaviors from each other.

Berani and Dumai have been living together in the Asian Forest Sanctuary Day Room at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium and regularly playing and cavorting in outdoor exhibits. Dumai is healthy and zookeepers are conducting his normal animal-care routine.

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Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest’s only combined zoo and aquarium, promotes responsible stewardship of the world’s resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).