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Contacts:

Kris Sherman, 253-404-3800; 253-226-6718 or kris.sherman@pdza.org

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-404-3637 or whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org

32-YEAR-OLD WALRUS E.T. SERIOUSLY ILL AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM

Team of veterinarians and zookeepers providing round-the-clock care

TACOMA, Wash. – E.T., the walrus who came to Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium as an orphan 32 years ago, is in “guarded” condition today after falling suddenly ill on Monday.



A team of three staff veterinarians is working to pinpoint the origin of E.T.’s illness, which has left him extremely lethargic and refusing to eat, zoo general curator Karen Goodrowe Beck said.

“We’re very concerned,” Goodrowe Beck said. E.T. has been lying quietly in his behind-the-scenes bedroom area since Monday.

The zoo’s medical staff, led by head veterinarian Dr. Karen Wolf, is investigating some abnormal blood levels, working to keep E.T. hydrated with fluids and administering a variety of medications, Goodrowe Beck said.

An ultrasonographer will attempt to evaluate the male walrus’ kidneys and abdomen later today. Zoo officials have asked several other veterinarians with expertise in marine mammal medicine to assist with E.T.’s care.

An endoscopy is scheduled Wednesday to examine E.T.’s gastrointestinal tract for signs of an ingested foreign object or possible infection.

“Right now, we don’t know what caused this illness,” Goodrowe Beck said. “Our veterinary staff and the experts we’re bringing in are taking all measures to care for E.T., treat his symptoms and determine the cause.”

The 3,300-pound walrus is receiving round-the-clock attention from veterinary and other zoological staff members, including the keepers who care for him on a daily basis.

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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).