



## THE VOTES ARE IN: GUESTS NAME MUSKOX CALF "WILLOW"

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TACOMA, Wash.—Meet Willow, a fuzzy, two-week-old muskox calf at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium. Adoring fans voted online for her name, chosen from a slate of four names offered by keepers at the Tacoma zoo.

Out of more than 11,200 votes, Willow was a clear winner with 43% of the vote, with runner-up names Aurora (27%), Juneau (16%) and Artemis (14%).

Why Willow? Because willow is a favorite food of the zoo's muskoxen, Charlotte (mom), Hudson (dad), and the calf.

"Within her first week of life, the calf was imitating Charlotte and mouthing willow so her new name is perfect for her," explained Assistant Curator Shannon Smith of the initial name suggestion. "She is getting most of her nutrition from nursing but mouths on food that mom eats, like timothy hay, willow, bark, and grass."

Willow will start eating specially formulated muskox pellets when she's one month old. She will also continue to nurse for a few months.

Baby Willow was born to mom Charlotte and dad Hudson on Thursday, Sept. 7, weighing about 20 pounds. She's expected to double her birth weight in her first month of life and is strong and active.

Willow loves doing zoomies around her habitat and running back to her mom. Smith says she is becoming more confident and independent each day and curious about any nearby keepers.

"Sometimes she will give mom a break to eat breakfast and choose to hang out around the keepers while they clean her habitat," said Smith.

"We are thrilled with how much she is growing and interacting with her new environment," said Curator Telena Welsh. "She is wonderful to observe."

The calf is dark brown with white legs and a small white patch on her head. Unlike her parents, she has no horns. Those will gradually grow, with buds becoming visible in three or four months and the horns themselves next year.

For now, guests can see Willow and Charlotte in the smaller side yard in the Arctic Tundra habitat. Mother and calf also have access to a behind-the-scenes area of the muskoxen habitat. Guests may or may not see the pair, depending on where Charlotte decides to be. In a few weeks, the duo will move to the biggest Arctic Tundra area (babyproofed!).

Muskoxen are an ancient species, having grazed the tundra and prairies of Greenland, Alaska, and northern Canada for thousands of years. Their numbers were significantly reduced from hunting by the early 20th century. The Northwest Game Act of 1917 allowed for conservation efforts that helped their recovery, and there are now around 80,000 muskoxen in the wild.

For more information about muskoxen, go to [pdza.org/muskox](https://pdza.org/muskox).

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**Media Contacts:**

Whitney DalBalcon, 253-278-6343 or [whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org](mailto:whitney.dalbalcon@pdza.org)

Tessa Miller, 253-331-5858 or [tessa.miller@pdza.org](mailto:tessa.miller@pdza.org)