



Press Release
For Immediate Release
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For More Information
Contact: Cynthia Shipley,
Marketing Manager
(416) 392-5938

THE TORONTO ZOO MOURNS THE SUDDEN DEATH OF AFRICAN ELEPHANT

Wednesday, September 3, 2008, Toronto, Ontario: Toronto Zoo today announced the sudden death of 'Tequila', a member of the Zoo's elephant herd. Tequila was discovered collapsed in the outdoor exhibit early Tuesday morning by her Keepers. She had not exhibited any signs of ill health and her death comes as a great shock. Tequila was 38. The average lifespan of elephants in captivity is 40 to 45 years.

A post-mortem will be conducted by Toronto Zoo Veterinary Staff, with assistance from Dr. Dale Smith of the University of Guelph, to hopefully determine the cause of death. Burial will take place on the Zoo site.

Elephants, just like people, go through a mourning process and the remaining elephants Toka, Iringa, Tara, Tessa, and Thika, Tequila's daughter, were able to say goodbye to her following her death. Animal Care staff observed Thika, who at first refused to leave her mother's side, carrying out digging behaviour and throwing dirt on the body. Thika was born in 1980 to Tequila and Tantor, who passed away in 1989.

"All the staff who worked with Tequila are deeply saddened by this loss and have wonderful memories of her time with us. Tequila was a gentle and intelligent elephant that enjoyed interacting with her Keepers. She would open her mouth for you to scratch her tongue and was always careful and deliberate in her movements around her Keepers, aware of the power of her great bulk. Her favourite treats were jellybeans which she would receive for letting her Keepers take a blood sample from her ear. Tequila will be deeply missed by all her human and animal friends." says Eric Cole, Supervisor of African Savanna.

Born in the wilds of Southern Africa, Tequila sailed to Canada via the Polish Ocean Line Zabrze and arrived at the Toronto Zoo in 1974. Once settled in at the Zoo, Tequila established herself as one of the most dominant elephants in the group and formed a special relationship with the bull elephant, Tantor. She gave birth to two calves before the death of Tantor.

The Toronto Zoo participates in a Species Survival Plan (SSP) for elephants and works continuously to improve elephant care in captivity. Current research projects include a study of reproductive cycles in elephants. The Toronto Zoo also supports valuable field research projects through its Endangered Species Reserve Fund, to help preserve this magnificent species in the wild.

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Current Zoo Hours and Admission Prices – Please note our hours have changed

Zoo Hours to Oct. 13th – 9:00 am to 6:00 pm. Last admissions one hour before closing. General Admission 13-64 incl. is \$20, Children 3 and under are free, Children 4-12 are \$12 and Seniors 65+ are \$14. Parking is \$8/vehicle. **Event schedule subject to change without notice.** The Zoo is located at Meadowvale Road and Hwy. 401, Exit 389 east and west bound. For general information, call (416) 392-5929. The Toronto Zoo is open year round (except December 25th). torontozoo.com