



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Niabi Zoo Giraffe

Coal Valley, IL – November

The loss of a majestic animal like our beloved giraffe, Mimi, should never go without insuring those who have visited, cared for, and supported such a wonderful animal have a better understanding of the underlying reasons such a valued life has been lost. In an effort to keep the community involved in the Niabi Zoo's happenings, management and staff would like to share and address the ongoing issue that the Zoo has been dealing with in our giraffe herd since 2007.

The parasite, a species of Roundworm known as *Haemonchus contortus*, is the most pathogenic parasite of large ruminants. Niabi Zoo staff has always been aware of Mimi's infection with this parasite, as it was a condition discovered shortly upon the herd's arrival at Niabi Zoo in 2007. Niabi Zoo's animal care staff and veterinarians had been treating all the Giraffes with a rotating gamut of deworming products and regularly monitoring their parasite load. Unfortunately this parasite is resistant to the majority of de-wormer treatments, said Dr. Lauren Hughes, Niabi Zoo's contracted veterinarian, so there is no real way to resolve the infestation. The hope is to keep the parasite load at low numbers. Dr. Hughes added that rotating through different deworming treatments is essential to minimizing a medication resistance within the parasite.

Infestation of *Haemonchus contortus* is known to cause anemia, digestive system upset, failure to absorb nutrients from food, lethargy, and weight loss. Mimi had exhibited all of these symptoms before passing away, and had been undergoing care and treatment. Usually in situations of increased infestation, the symptoms appear quickly and then rapidly become fatal, said Dr. Hughes, much like they did for Mimi.

In recent years, Niabi Zoo has taken proactive steps to ensure new animals entering its collection are healthy and free of similar parasite infections. Since 2012, we have implemented a rigorous set of requirements for all animals to meet before they are considered for addition to our animal collection, said Daniel Meates, Interim Niabi Zoo Director. All incoming animals must have a full bloodwork screening, three negative results for parasite fecal checks within 30 days of shipment, and numerous other tests before they can make the trip to Niabi Zoo. The Zoo also requires a minimum period of 30 days in quarantine for every animal once it arrives on-site and then again a repeat of all the pre-ship tests as the quarantine period comes to an end.

These are all changes we recognized as vital in order to protect our animals and make sure they are as healthy as possible, said Meates. We have implemented the best practices in the Zoo field, but there are difficult lingering situations such as the Giraffe herd where we work to improve their lives and hope for the best outcome. Niabi Zoo staff has also, in addition to the new animal acquisition policies, implemented enhanced disinfection protocols and facility renovations to prevent the spread of parasites and other diseases between animals.