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**For Immediate Release**

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**FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO WELCOMES FOUR SLENDER-TAILED MEERKATS**

*Fresno, CA* – Fresno Chaffee Zoo is excited to announce that, for the first time in the Zoo's history, it is now home to four slender-tailed meerkats.

All four meerkats came from to Fresno from Florida in December 2015. The female meerkats – Karoo, 13, and Teza, 8 – came from Busch Gardens Tampa Bay while the two males – Jasper, 5, and Creeper, 4 – came from Brevard Zoo.

Since their arrival, the meerkats have undergone a 30-day quarantine period as well as thorough behind-the-scenes introductions.

"All of our animals undergo a quarantine period for two reasons," said Denise Robertson, hospital manager at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. "The first is to make sure that the animals have a non-stressed environment after their trip and the second is to make sure that they don't have any underlying illnesses."

The meerkats were introduced to one another off exhibit because they are a territorial species.

"Animal introductions are an extremely important and delicate process," Robertson said. "Meerkats are territorial, so if we let one group go out on exhibit first, it could cause issues, so we introduced them together and let them go out on at the same time."

Currently, the meerkats have access to their exhibit and their behind-the-scenes area from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily.

"They're still getting used to their new environment," said Lyn Myers, interim general curator at Fresno Chaffee Zoo. "But we are so excited that they're here and can't wait for the public to meet them and learn all about this amazing animal."

Slender-tailed meerkat, *Suricata suricatta*, can be found in Southern Africa, specifically in the Kalahari Desert, and live amongst sandy plains and in underground burrows. This carnivorous species, a relative of the mongoose, has long, curved claws for digging and dark rings around their eyes that helps to reduce the sun's glare. Meerkats consume small insects, rodents, and lizards.

*Fresno Chaffee Zoo is open daily at 9 a.m. Closing times vary 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. by season (subject to change without prior notice). Thanksgiving (9 a.m. – 2 p.m.) and Christmas Day (closed). Visit [www.fresnochaffeezoo.org](http://www.fresnochaffeezoo.org) for current hours. General admission during regular Zoo hours is \$10 for adults and \$5.50 for children 2-11 & seniors 62+. Children under 2 and Fresno Chaffee Zoo members are free. Fresno Chaffee Zoo inspires wonder of our natural world, provides an engaging learning environment, and creates a passion for conservation. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).*

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