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FRESNO CHAFFEE ZOO MOURNS DEATH OF ORANGUTAN SARA

Fresno, CA – Officials at Fresno Chaffee Zoo are deeply saddened to announce the death of 49-year-old female Sumatran orangutan, Sara.

Sara was humanely euthanized after the discovery of metastatic cancer during a procedure. The animal care team observed Sara exhibiting signs of discomfort and decreased appetite recently. During a procedure last week to determine the source of her illness, the veterinary team discovered a tumor. In a follow up procedure to remove the mass, the veterinary team found additional tumors and determined that she had metastatic cancer in her liver, intestines and lymph nodes.

“Our veterinary staff and animal care team discussed many treatment options including chemotherapy, further surgery and palliative care,” said Dr. Shannon Nodolf, Chief Veterinary Officer. “Our main concerns were her comfort and quality of life. Given Sara’s age and the severe side effects of treatment, the decision was made to humanely euthanize her.”

Sara would have celebrated 50 years in August and had well surpassed the median life expectancy of female Sumatran orangutans, which is approximately 26 years. She was born at Philadelphia Zoo and arrived at Fresno Chaffee Zoo in 2001 from Audubon Zoo.

“This is a difficult loss for our animal care team as well as the volunteers and guests in our community who came to know Sara during her 19 years at Fresno Chaffee Zoo,” said Scott Barton, CEO. “While they grieve this loss, I commend our zookeepers and veterinary staff for their commitment to compassionate animal care from birth to end of life.”

Sara was good with babies and was well known for her skill at helping to raise the babies of other orangutans. She was mother to Labu, born in 2010, and acted as a surrogate mother to Siabu, a 31-year-old female that also came to Fresno Chaffee Zoo with her. Zookeepers recall that Sara enjoyed playing hand games with them and other favorites of hers included ChapStick, tomatoes and men with beards. In addition to Siabu and Labu, Fresno Chaffee Zoo is home to 36-year old male Busar, 9-year-old female Ndari and 1-year-old male Hantu.

"Fresno Chaffee Zoo inspires wonder of our natural world, provides an engaging learning environment, and creates a passion for conservation."

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