



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jackson Zoo Deeply Saddened by Unexpected Death of Giraffe

Jackson, Miss.— Staff of the Jackson Zoological Society are sad to announce the death of “Casper,” the 14-year-old Reticulated giraffe who had been greeting visitors since his arrival at the zoo in November of 2004. He died on Sunday afternoon, October 29th, due to complications from urinary blockage.

His keepers witnessed changes in his behavior, and they immediately notified Jackson Zoo veterinarian team, technician Donna Todd, and Doctors Michael and Beckey Holifield. After close observation and testing, they suspected that he might suffer from bladder stones. Since any illness in giraffes can be serious due to their size and build, keepers and the vet team made every effort to resolve the issues and put him back on a healthy track. His condition seemed to improve, as he was seen actively engaging with younger adopted brother, “Knox.” Unfortunately, Casper’s improvement was temporary, and he died behind the scenes with his animal care staff present.

“The male giraffe, Casper, was diagnosed as having urinary stones with a blockage and despite medical management and nutritional changes he did not improve,” said Dr. Michael Holifield in a statement. “An attempt to surgically remove the stones was unsuccessful.”

Casper was born in Milwaukee in 2003, and joined the Jackson Zoo when he was one year old. Casper became an icon of the Jackson Zoo experience, as he was almost always the very first animal encountered when guests entered the gates.

Unfortunately, zoo staff has also been adjusting to the loss of the female Amur leopard, “Katya,” who had to be euthanized on October 15th. She had been exhibiting signs of extreme age related issues for some time, and her keepers monitored her closely. When her behavior indicated a serious quality of life decline, her caregivers made the difficult decision to let her go. Katya was born at the Pittsburg Zoo in 2000, and had joined the Asian area of the Jackson Zoo in November of 2005. She and her surviving mate, “Nicolai,” were part of the Amur Leopard Species Survival Program. They have a female offspring in Cape May Zoo, NJ.

“Life and death, occurring for all living things, is part of the day to day experience in any zoo,” said Jackson Zoo Executive Director Beth Poff. “Every animal’s passing is felt, especially with the ones that our guests see as long time ‘celebrities.’ It will be sad to no longer greet ‘Casper’ as we enter the zoo, he will be missed.”

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The Jackson Zoo is accredited by the Zoological Association of America, and certified by the Better Business Bureau.

The mission of the Jackson Zoo is to provide visitors with a quality recreational and educational environment dedicated to wildlife care and conservation. For more information, visit The Jackson Zoo online at jacksonzoo.org, or on [facebook.com/JacksonZoo](https://www.facebook.com/JacksonZoo).

