FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 7, 2019

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Brevard Zoo mourns loss of giraffe

MELBOURNE, Fla., October 7, 2019 — Last week, Brevard Zoo animal care staff noticed nearly-year-old Masai giraffe T-Bone was lethargic, uninterested in food and producing diarrhea. Veterinary staff analyzed his blood and feces, discovering evidence of higher-than-normal quantities of gastrointestinal worms and anemia. He was immediately given antiparasitic medication and his condition appeared to improve.

On Thursday morning, keepers discovered T-Bone had died overnight. A necropsy confirmed the extremity of the infection resulted in severe blood loss.

Gastrointestinal worms are commonly found in giraffe both in human care and the wild as part of their “gut fauna,” albeit in smaller quantities. It is not immediately clear why they were so abundant in T-Bone.

The same parasites remain present in the Zoo’s other giraffe at normal levels. Although the animals are not exhibiting symptoms, keepers are keeping a close eye on their health. The Zoo is examining its parasite mitigation protocol to reduce the likelihood of a similar occurrence in the future.

“This is a significant loss for our Zoo and the community at large,” said Keith Winsten, the Zoo’s executive director. “T-Bone was an intelligent, curious giraffe who inspired hundreds of thousands of guests during his time with us.”

Masai giraffe are considered endangered due to habitat loss and poaching. Those wishing to honor T-Bone are encouraged to contribute to Giraffe Conservation Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting giraffe throughout their native range.

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Brevard Zoo is home to more than 900 animals representing 195 species from all over the world. As a not-for-profit organization, it is a leader in the fields of animal wellness, education and conservation. More information is available at www.brevardzoo.org.
Treetop Trek features five aerial obstacle courses that whisk guests above parts of the Zoo and through lush Florida landscapes. More information is available at www.treetoptrek.com.

The Aquarium Project is a plan to construct a world-class aquarium and conservation center at Port Canaveral. More information is available at www.theaquariumproject.org.