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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Giraffe Calf Passes First Baby Exam**

**ABILENE, TEXAS** – The giraffe calf born Saturday at the Abilene Zoo is thriving, while first-time mom, Punk, has taken to her role like a pro.

Zoo keepers are keeping a close eye on the pair as they bond, knowing that the first weeks are a challenging time for any newborn. So far, they like what they see.

“He’s a curious, rambunctious boy and a healthy eater,” said Dr. Stephanie Carle, the zoo’s tired veterinarian. “He nurses with such gusto that everyone can hear him slurping and suckling. It’s music to our ears.”

The young male weighed in at 120 pounds and 68 inches tall and will grow quickly. His newborn medical exam this week indicates that he is healthy with no abnormalities.

“We ran tests on his blood to ensure that he is getting adequate colostrum from his mother’s milk,” Carle said. “We checked it all -- eyes, ears, mouth, his heart and lungs, as well as his digestive tract. Everything is functioning as it should.”

While the newborn is sticking close to his attentive mother, he also is slowly being introduced to the other animals in the herd, which includes three other adult females, father Mesi, and an 8-month-old male named Kito. Animal staff is working to baby proof the Giraffe Safari yard to prepare for his public debut in the upcoming weeks.

The zoo staff plans to name the calf rather than invite the public to christen the young bull. Because he is genetically valuable and an approved breeding animal for the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ Species Survival Plans, the animal likely will join a giraffe herd at another AZA facility when he hits puberty.

**About the Abilene Zoo:**

Since its founding in 1966, the Abilene Zoo has stood as a place of learning and adventure, where visitors make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife. Situated on 16 acres in the award-winning Grover Nelson Park, the zoo has more than 1000 animals of 270 species from around the globe. The zoo is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Last admittance is 4 p.m. The zoo is open until 9 p.m. each Thursday all summer, with last admittance at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7 for adults, \$4.50 for children ages 3-12, \$6 for seniors aged 60 and older. Members are admitted free. [www.abilenezoo.org](http://www.abilenezoo.org). 325-676-6085.

***Mission Statement:*** *The Abilene Zoo is a place of learning and adventure, where families make memories, share the joy of discovery and become inspired to preserve wildlife.*