



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**May 31, 2016****MEDIA CONTACT:**

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ABILENE, TEXAS –The Abilene Zoo staff is excited to announce that Punk, one of its longtime reticulated giraffe, is pregnant.

Punk has interacted with zoo guests since arriving from Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in 2003. The pregnancy is the first for the 16-year-old animal. The father is Mesi, the Rothschild giraffe bull who joined the herd in fall 2014.

“We’re thrilled to once again have a breeding group of giraffe and contribute to the sustainability of this threatened species,” said Executive Director Bill Gersonde.

Giraffe gestation is 15 months, and the zoo’s vet, Dr. Stephanie Carle, believes Punk is likely to give birth late this summer or early fall.

“Giraffe are sensitive to touch, and she hasn’t let us ultrasound her belly yet,” Carle said. “But the zoo keepers are working to get her comfortable with that procedure.”

Staff is keeping a close eye on the animal because giraffe pregnancies and births can be complicated.

“The six foot fall from the birth canal can be very dangerous for newborn giraffes even in the wild,” Carle said.

One of the goals of the new Giraffe Safari exhibit is to improve the animals’ living space and allow for a cooperative breeding program through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plans for threatened and endangered animals. Mesi and Punk are a genetically approved pair. Mesi also is approved to breed with another reticulated giraffe in the herd, Jamie, a five-year-old who arrived from the Dallas Zoo this spring.

The last time a giraffe was born at the Abilene zoo was in 2002, when Asha, another longtime member of the current herd, gave birth to a male.

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 7 days a week (closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, and New Year’s Day) from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4 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. 325-676-6085.

