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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Camel encounters offered daily at the zoo**

ABILENE, TEXAS – Abilene Zoo guests are getting a hands-on adventure this summer at zoo keeper chats with the zoo’s two new camels at 2 p.m. every day.

Zoo keepers have trained the duo of dromedary camels to “cush,” a safe kind of kneeling that allows zoo guests to come up and pet the camels. The zoo keepers give an educational talk first, then allow guests to line up and pet a camel.

“We know that these types of hands-on experiences make special memories for our guests,” said Abilene Zoo Executive Director Bill Gersonde. “It’s a great photo opportunity, and something we know families treasure. For us, it’s a way to get children excited about animals and preserving wildlife. The response to this has been great.”

The seven-month-old camels came to the Abilene Zoo from a Texas camel farm in February and were named Dakota and Sahara in a public naming contest. Dakota is the smaller of the two, weighing in at 300 pounds and standing just under five feet tall at the hump. Sahara is up to 400 pounds and stands just above five feet.

The zoo schedules daily keeper chats on other topics, as well. Just check the sign at the door to learn where to catch their other daily presentations.

The Abilene Zoo is home to more than 900 animals of 250 different species. The zoo is open 7 days a week from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Last admittance is 4 p.m. Tickets are \$6 for adults, \$3.50 for children ages 3-12, \$5 for seniors aged 60+. Members are admitted free. Memberships start at \$30. [www.abilenezoo.org](http://www.abilenezoo.org). 325-676-6085. This summer, the zoo will be open every Thursday until 9 p.m. with last admittance at 8 p.m.

**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.*