Zoo's giraffe family to grow this summer

Staff report

Autumn, the Greenville Zoo's 7-year-old Masai giraffe, is pregnant again and is expected to give birth this summer, officials said.

This will be the second calf for Walter, 8 years old, and Autumn, who gave birth to Kiko in October 2012.

Nearly one million viewers worldwide watched the live stream of the Giraffe Exhibit on the zoo's GiraffeCam, and viewers will once again have the opportunity to watch Autumn during her second pregnancy.

"This is great news for the zoo, the Greenville community and the giraffe Species Survival Program," said Greenville Zoo Director Jeff Bullock.

"We know the birth of Kiko truly captivated our community, and we hope our new addition will receive the same welcome to Greenville."

Veterinary staff confirmed Autumn's pregnancy through hormone analysis and will continue to watch her progress through her 15-month gestation period.

According to Dr. Heather Miller, deputy administrator for animal health at the Greenville Zoo, Autumn will be monitored primarily through weighing her every few weeks.

"Unfortunately, Autumn is not trained for us to perform ultrasounds on her, but she does go through our giraffe restraint device daily and it is very easy to obtain an accurate weight on her."

Giraffe births are unusual in that they give birth while standing, and the baby is born hooves-first.

A newborn calf, which can weigh between 120-150 pounds and stand 6-feet tall at birth, will usually take its first steps within an hour of its birth.

Giraffes are one of the few animals born with horns on their heads. "I want to thank all zoo staff members for providing the giraffes and all the animals in the zoo's collection with exceptional care," Bullock said.

"It is because of their dedication and commitment that the Greenville Zoo can participate in the Species Survival Programs."

Both Walter and Autumn are on loan to the Greenville Zoo as part of a breeding program.

Autumn came from the Franklin Park Zoo in Boston, where she was born on Jan. 7, 2006. Walter was born on Nov. 9, 2005, and came from the San Diego Zoo.

Both animals arrived in Greenville in July 2007 as part of a three-way loan agreement.

According to the agreement, the first calf (Kiko) belongs to the owner of the dam, which is the Franklin Park Zoo. The second calf will belong to the owner of the sire (the San Diego Zoo), and the third calf will belong to the Greenville Zoo.

"Autumn has proven to be an excellent mother, and we anticipate that she will take great care of a new calf," said Miller.



Kiko, left, will be joined by a sibling sometime this summer, as his mother, Autumn, right, is pregnant. STAFF FILE