NEWS RELEASE

December 8, 2011

Animal care a top priority - zookeeper resigns.

Calgary, AB – Calgary Zoo officials today announced the resignation of a keeper following a disciplinary meeting held as a result of the keeper failing to follow animal-handling instructions which contributed to the death of a corn snake.

“Following a thorough investigation, meetings between the employee, the Union, City of Calgary Human Resources, City of Calgary Labour Relations and the Calgary Zoo, a final disciplinary meeting was scheduled today,” said Michelle Poisson, Director of Human Resources, Education and Health & Safety. “The employee chose to resign following our review of the incident.”

“The zoo has taken this very seriously and after a thorough investigation came to the conclusion that this was not simply a mistake or an accident and this person should no longer form part of our animal care team. The employee failed to follow specific husbandry procedures relating to this animal, did not ask for assistance from senior keepers or the area manager on duty and showed a significant lack of judgment in improvising a non-approved procedure that contributed to the death of one of our animals.”

The incident occurred on October 9, 2011. This particular reptile required an accessible heat source prior to being fed in order to increase its metabolism and encourage feeding. The keeper did not follow the instructions and left the snake unattended. A post-mortem examination by a zoo veterinarian supported hyperthermic shock as the cause of death.

“Animal welfare is our first priority,” said Dr. Clément Lanthier, President & CEO of the zoo. “We cannot tolerate actions by an employee that jeopardize the health and well-being of the animals entrusted to our care.”

Contact:

Laurie Skene
Manager, Communications
Phone: (403) 232-9388
Cell: (403) 899-7080
lauries@calgaryzoo.ab.ca

See: www.calgaryzoo.com