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Toledo Zoo Saddened by Death of White Rhinoceros

TOLEDO, Ohio— The Toledo Zoo is sad to report that one of its most beloved animals, 44-year-old Sam, a geriatric male southern white rhinoceros, was humanely euthanized today due to declining health.

Sam was born on June 28, 1973 at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and was donated to the Toledo Zoo from the Philadelphia Zoo in 1988. With the help of specialized geriatric care, such as pedicures and skin care, from the dedicated animal care staff and keepers, Sam enjoyed a long and enriched life at the Toledo Zoo. According to the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) Southern White Rhino Species Survival Plan (SSP) studbook, the average life expectancy is 33.9 years.

“With Sam’s incredibly advanced age, a variety of therapies and management strategies were utilized to address his unique geriatric needs. Over the past year, we treated multiple on-going medical issues, including arthritis, urinary and gastrointestinal challenges, as well. Both the animal husbandry and veterinary teams worked diligently to ensure Sam’s quality of life was optimized, however, his medical challenges increased substantially over the last month. The decision was made to humanely euthanize Sam when it was medically determined that his quality of life would not rebound. We will find out more details after the necropsy and histopathology results come back,” said Dr. Kirsten Thomas, Toledo Zoo veterinarian.

“Sam was a magnificent creature that many of our visitors sought out during their Zoo trips, knew by name and enjoyed observing wallowing in mud or interacting with enrichment items. Throughout his long life, Sam was a wonderful ambassador for his endangered species and helped educate many on the plight of rhinos being poached for their horns. He will be dearly missed by all that cared for and loved him,” said the Zoo’s director of communications, Shayla Bell Moriarty.

Sam’s longtime companion, Lulu, passed away at the age of 47 in April of 2016. The Zoo has plans to bring in a new rhinoceros in the near future.

The Toledo Zoo is committed to inspiring others to join us in caring for animals and conserving the natural world. As part of that mission, the Toledo Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums ([AZA](#)), a leader in global wildlife conservation. AZA member institutions are dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for visitors and a better future for all living things. Submitted by: Kim Haddix.

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