

PRESS RELEASE

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Zoo euthanizes geriatric mountain goat

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo humanely euthanized a female mountain goat over the weekend due to age-related decline and immobility. The goat, named C.K., was just a week shy of her 21st birthday. Mountain goats can live 12 to 15 years in the wild and 16 to 20 years in zoos.

For more than a year, C.K.'s health and quality of life had been under close observation. Keepers had monitored her seasonal weight trends for years and were able to show an overall gradual decline. Using this information, keepers over the last several months began measuring other parameters such as appetite and activity.

"C.K. was geriatric and slow, with age-related arthritis. She took a sudden downturn in the past two weeks, exhibiting weight loss, decreased appetite and activity, and spending more time lying down," said Dr. Kelly Helmick, Woodland Park Zoo's associate veterinarian. "C.K. no longer could stand so we made the difficult and humane decision to euthanize her."

As a standard procedure, the zoo's animal health team performed a necropsy (an animal autopsy). Preliminary necropsy findings suggest a metastasized tumor in multiple organs, but the final cause of death is pending histology and other confirmatory diagnostics.

"For more than two decades, C.K. graced the high rocky crags and ledges in the zoo's Northern Trail exhibit, showing visitors the remarkable, agile footwork of mountain goats. She was active and athletic as a young animal, but at the same time was very calm and tractable with her keepers," said Nancy Hawkes, PhD, general curator at Woodland Park Zoo. "We will miss her." C.K. was the last surviving mountain goat born at Woodland Park Zoo.

A 2-year-old male goat, Albert, arrived last fall and remains in the mountain goat exhibit. He can be seen in the award-winning Northern Trail exhibit along with other animals that have adapted to the cold, rugged regions of the north including grizzlies, snowy owls, wolves, elk and Steller's sea eagles. The zoo will be seeking another mountain goat to eventually join him.

Helmick explained that animals in zoos are living longer. "The field of zoo medicine continues to evolve in multiple areas such as improved husbandry and management techniques, excellent animal care, better nutrition and increased medical knowledge," said Helmick. "As life expectancies are increasing in many animals, we provide appropriate geriatric care and treatment as they experience the aches and pains of getting older."

To address the longer life expectancies for many animal species, the zoo has a formal process to evaluate quality of life daily, sometimes multiple times daily, over the course of weeks or months once there is a specific concern for an individual's well-being. The decision to euthanize an animal is a very difficult one and is made after consultation between veterinary and appropriate animal care staff.

Rocky Mountain goats naturally range from southern Alaska, Canada, Washington, Idaho and Montana. Transplanted populations now live in Colorado, Oregon, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, South Dakota and Washington's Olympic Peninsula. Remarkably adapted for life on steep, cold mountain ledges, mountain goats live, sleep, and eat at elevations of 10,000 feet and up. They are especially adept at hanging out in extremely harsh conditions such as snowy slopes with pitches above 60 degrees, winds up to 100 mph, snow drifts of 30–60 feet high and chilly temperatures down to -50 degrees.



A mountain goat's incredible adaptations allow it to live high above potential predators such as mountain lions, bears or wolverines. The only predator that lives above the timberline is the golden eagle which might attack a newborn or very young goat.

Woodland Park Zoo supports the conservation of mountain goats and other Cascadia wildlife through the [Living Northwest](#) project suite.

For more information about Woodland Park Zoo or to become a member, visit www.zoo.org or call 206.548.2500.

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