

## PRESS RELEASE

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Editor note: For more photos, visit the zoo's blog: <http://bit.ly/babygiraffeshoes>

### **Giraffe update: 5-day-old baby is outfitted with therapeutic shoes** ***Zoo's exhibits team lends helping hands by custom-making shoes***

SEATTLE—Woodland Park Zoo's baby male giraffe has been outfitted with custom-made therapeutic shoes in the next phase of treatment of his rear leg abnormalities.



The baby was born on May 2 to mom Olivia. Hours after his birth, the zoo's animal health team radiographed his rear legs after noticing each rear foot was not in normal alignment. "The condition is known as hyperextended fetlocks. It is well documented in horses and has been reported to occur in giraffes," said Dr. Tim Storms, associate veterinarian at Woodland Park Zoo.

One day after the giraffe was born, the zoo's animal health team applied casts on both rear legs to help stabilize his limbs.

After consultations of medical literature and colleagues at other zoos, the zoo's exhibits team was called in to help. The talented team of exhibit artists specially crafted two-piece shoes made of high density polyethylene and plywood with grooves for better adhesion to the foot and for better traction.

"At this stage, the new therapeutic shoes are on a trial basis but I'm hopeful that they will help him walk better. We'll continue refining and improving our approach to find a good balance between supporting his limbs and strengthening his tendons," said Storms. "We're so very grateful to our in-house exhibits team for jumping in to help our baby giraffe. We're very touched by their eagerness to lend their expertise to caring for this new life. It's been all hands on deck for our baby."

Treatment will most likely span over several months. "While our baby giraffe is healthy and continues nursing and bonding with mom, he remains in guarded condition and under close observation. As we move forward with his treatment, we'll continue assessing the best course of action to help him walk and grow normally," added Storms.

During the veterinary procedure, the baby weighed in at 170.5 pounds, up from a birth weight of 155 pounds. Mom and her baby remain off view in the barn for an indefinite period and to allow continued maternal bonding and nursing in a cozy, private setting.

The yet-unnamed baby giraffe was born to mom Olivia and dad Dave. It is the first offspring between the 12-year-old mom and 6-year-old dad; Olivia had her first baby in 2013 at Woodland Park Zoo with a different mate.

The last giraffe birth at the zoo was a female, Lulu, born in 2017 to mom Tufani—Olivia's younger sister—and dad Dave. In addition to the baby, Olivia, Dave and Tufani make up the current herd of giraffes at the zoo.

Viewers can see updates by visiting [www.zoo.org/giraffe](http://www.zoo.org/giraffe) and following the zoo's [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

The parents, Olivia and Dave, were paired under a breeding recommendation made by the Giraffe Species Survival Plan, a cooperative, conservation breeding program across accredited zoos to help ensure a healthy, self-sustaining population of giraffes.

Woodland Park Zoo participates in 111 Species Survival Plans, overseen by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. Led by experts in husbandry, nutrition, veterinary care, behavior, and genetics, these plans also involve a variety of other collaborative conservation activities such as research, public education, reintroduction and field projects.

Giraffes are widespread across southern and eastern Africa, with smaller isolated populations in west and central Africa. New population surveys estimate an overall 40 percent decline in the giraffe population; fewer than 100,000 exist today. Of the currently recognized subspecies of giraffe, five have decreasing populations, while three are increasing and one is stable.

Giraffe enthusiasts can stick their necks out for giraffes and help support conservation efforts by visiting Woodland Park Zoo and supporting the Wildlife Survival Program, which includes the Giraffe Conservation Foundation. The Foundation seeks to provide the first long-term ecological monitoring effort of the Angolan giraffe—an important desert-dwelling giraffe subspecies in north-western Namibia. Visit <http://www.zoo.org/conservation> to learn more about the zoo's conservation partnerships taking place in the Pacific Northwest and around the world.

Spring/summer zoo hours are 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. For more information or to become a zoo member, visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) or call 206.548.2500.

Founded in 1899, Woodland Park Zoo engages more than a million visitors of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and walks of life in extraordinary experiences with animals, inspiring them to make conservation a priority in their lives. The zoo is helping to save animals and their habitats in the wild through more than 35 wildlife conservation projects in the Pacific Northwest and around the world. Woodland Park Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and certified by the rigorous American Humane Conservation program. The Humane Certified™ seal of approval is another important validation of the zoo's long-standing tradition of meeting the highest standards in animal welfare. Visit [www.zoo.org](http://www.zoo.org) and follow the zoo on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

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