

Heroic Effort Saves Critically Ill Newborn Giraffe

Safari West's expert team overcomes incredible odds to save Safiri, a newborn giraffe calf, showcasing their dedication to wildlife conservation.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- On June 26, 2024, Safari West welcomed its 52nd giraffe calf, Safiri, whose name means "Journey" in Swahili. From the moment of her birth, Safiri's journey became a fight for survival that would challenge and inspire the entire Safari West team.

Early Challenges and Response

In the early hours of June 26, animal caregivers found Safiri shivering, wet, and splayed. The team quickly assisted her by repositioning her legs and conducting a brief exam. Her body temperature had plummeted to a dangerously low 92°F, far below the normal 101°F for giraffes. Initial blood tests revealed infection and critically low glucose levels.

Immediate Action:

- Comprehensive Treatment Plan: Dr. Emily Cehrs, staff veterinarian, along with Animal Collection Manager Nikki Smith and Assistant Manager Erika Defer, developed a plan using blankets



Gentle Eyed Baby



Safiri and Care Givers

and a Bair Hugger warming system to stabilize Safiri's temperature. They administered IV fluids and antibiotics to combat infection and low glucose levels.

- Separation for Intensive Care: Despite her mother Malaika's interest, Safiri was not nursing adequately. The team made the difficult decision to separate her from her mother for intensive care. Dr. Cehrs determined that Safiri needed to be tube-fed colostrum and milk until she could transition to bottle-feeding.

Collaborative Efforts and Intensive Care

In collaboration with veterinarians from the Oakland Zoo, Safiri was sedated to place an IV catheter. During this procedure, her condition became critical. Once stabilized, she received multiple plasma transfusions, with giraffe plasma graciously provided by the Oakland Zoo.

Continuous Monitoring:

- Dr. Cehrs placed a semi-permanent port in Safiri's neck to facilitate the administration of fluids, antibiotics, and plasma.
- The team monitored her condition around the clock, performing frequent diagnostic tests including blood cultures, glucose tests every two hours, and full blood panels.

“

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Nikki Smith

- For the first three days, Safiri received 24-hour ICU care. Dr. Cehrs stayed overnight for several nights, while Nikki Smith worked 16-hour shifts to ensure constant monitoring. Safiri's condition was 'touch and go,' and the team was unsure if she would survive.

Signs of Improvement

Gradually, Safiri began to show signs of improvement. Her body temperature stabilized, glucose levels held steady, and she gained strength. Nikki Smith worked tirelessly to transition Safiri to bottle feeding, a process that involved

hours of patience and dedication. After the initial acceptance of the bottle, Erika Defer was integrated into the process to continue solidifying her bottle transition and ensure she was receiving adequate nutrition. Their efforts were supported by protocols and advice generously shared by Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and San Diego Zoo, both experienced in hand-rearing giraffe calves.



Safiri and Mom

Quotes from Caregivers

"Watching Safiri gain strength day by day has been an incredibly rewarding experience," said Nikki Smith. "Her journey from critical condition to playful calf is a testament to the dedication and teamwork of everyone involved."

Current Status and Future Care

- **Ongoing Care:** Two weeks after her birth, Safiri's condition has significantly improved. She receives bottle feedings every four hours and is weighed weekly to ensure she receives the appropriate amount of milk for her body weight.
- **Reduced Medical Intervention:** With her immune system stabilizing, daily blood draws have ceased, and she is receiving more husbandry care and less medical intervention.
- **Integration:** Safiri is being slowly introduced to members of her tower, including her mother, to learn and express natural giraffe behaviors.

A Symbol of Hope

This rescue highlights Safari West's commitment to conservation and the vital role of expert care in wildlife preservation. As Safiri continues to grow stronger each day, she serves as a powerful symbol of hope and a reminder of the critical work done by facilities like Safari West in protecting endangered species.

Safari West extends its deepest gratitude to the veterinarians at the Oakland Zoo, the giraffe blood donors at the Oakland Zoo, and the teams at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and San Diego Zoo for their invaluable assistance and guidance throughout this challenging journey. We also want to thank our incredible Safari West staff, whose tireless dedication, hard work, and unwavering commitment made Safiri's recovery possible.

Call to Action

To learn more about [Safiri's journey](#) and how you can support wildlife conservation efforts at Safari West, please visit our website.

About Safari West

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