



## **NEWS RELEASE**

- For immediate release -

May 27, 2010

### ***Three critically endangered Asian Wild Horse foals born at the Calgary Zoo ranch***

Calgary, AB – For the first time since 1994, three Asian Wild Horse foals have been born at the Calgary Zoo’s endangered species breeding facility – the Devonian Wildlife Conservation Centre (DWCC). The adorable new additions, now frolicking in the meadows at the zoo’s ranch, expand the herd from 8 to 11 horses.

The public will have the chance to name the foals. The three foals were born on April 24 (colt\*), May 2 (filly<sup>†</sup>), and May 20 (filly) – contest details follow. All of them were sired by Varanasi, a stallion born at the San Diego Wild Animal Park and introduced to the Calgary herd in 2008. All three mares, Naghai, Molly and Chilka, were born at the Granby Zoo in Quebec.

Asian wild horses or Przewalski’s horses are classified as critically endangered by the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The captive population in North America is managed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Species Survival Plan and supports the reintroduction of this species that was once extinct in the wild.

“It is great to once again be participating in the breeding program for this endangered species,” said Bob Peel, curator for the DWCC. “While these foals will not likely be reintroduced to the wild, they represent the next generation for an aging captive population.”

In the 1990s, reintroduction efforts started in Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan and Ukraine; but today Mongolia is the only country where truly wild reintroduced populations exist within their historic range. All Przewalski’s horses alive today are descended from only 13 or 14 individual animals which were the nucleus of the captive breeding program.

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\* Colt: male foal

† Filly: female foal

In a reflection of the bittersweet reality of life, as keepers were celebrating the latest new arrival on May 20, they also had to say a sad goodbye to the oldest mare in the herd at 26 years old due to age-related health concerns.

"It is always sad when an animal you have worked with for years succumbs to the frailties of old age," said Bob Peel. "However, it is part of the cycle of life that as we welcome new births we must accept the reality of eventual death."

### **FOAL NAMING CONTEST DETAILS:**

The naming contests for the foals commence on the zoo's website on Thursday, May 27. There will be one contest each week for three weeks – one for each foal. See: [www.calgaryzoo.org/namethefoal](http://www.calgaryzoo.org/namethefoal).

To conform to the naming standards for horses, the names submitted for the foals should begin with the letter **V** (after the sire Varanasi); keepers will select the name for each foal from submissions entered. All three people whose entries are selected as names for the foals will be invited to visit the zoo ranch to see them in person.

Contest May 27 to June 1 for the colt born April 24 to Naghai

Contest June 2 to June 8 for the filly born May 2 to Molly

Contest June 9 to June 15 for the filly born May 20 to Chilka

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### **Media Information:**

Photos and b-roll are available at:

[http://www.calgaryzoo.com/image\\_dnld/P-horse-video-photos.zip](http://www.calgaryzoo.com/image_dnld/P-horse-video-photos.zip)

Backgrounder attached.

Interviews available upon request with Bob Peel, curator and/or Rick Wenman, zookeeper.

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*The Calgary Zoo is part of a professional, accredited association and member of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and the Canadian Association of Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA) comprised of caring, trusted experts committed to ensuring that many endangered and threatened species are part of the world's future. AZA and CAZA advocate on behalf of animals with a unified and consistent voice, and collaborate with others committed to their long-term survival. The Calgary Zoo participates in many Species Survival Plans (SSP), a network among accredited institutions designed to breed endangered species in captivity to ensure the best possible genetic diversity and maintain healthy populations in human care. Through our conservation, education and research programs, many animals in our care play an essential role in the survival of their species in the wild.*

*The Calgary Zoological Society is a charitable organization. Charitable Registration #118824192 RR0001*