

# When to call it:

Admiring the teamwork and training efforts for the wellbeing of the Reticulated Giraffe “Abi”

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# Team Set Up



- 9 Years Old
- Eager, attentive, motivated

- Giraffe/Elephant Staff
- Vet Staff
- New team within 4-year period



# Condition

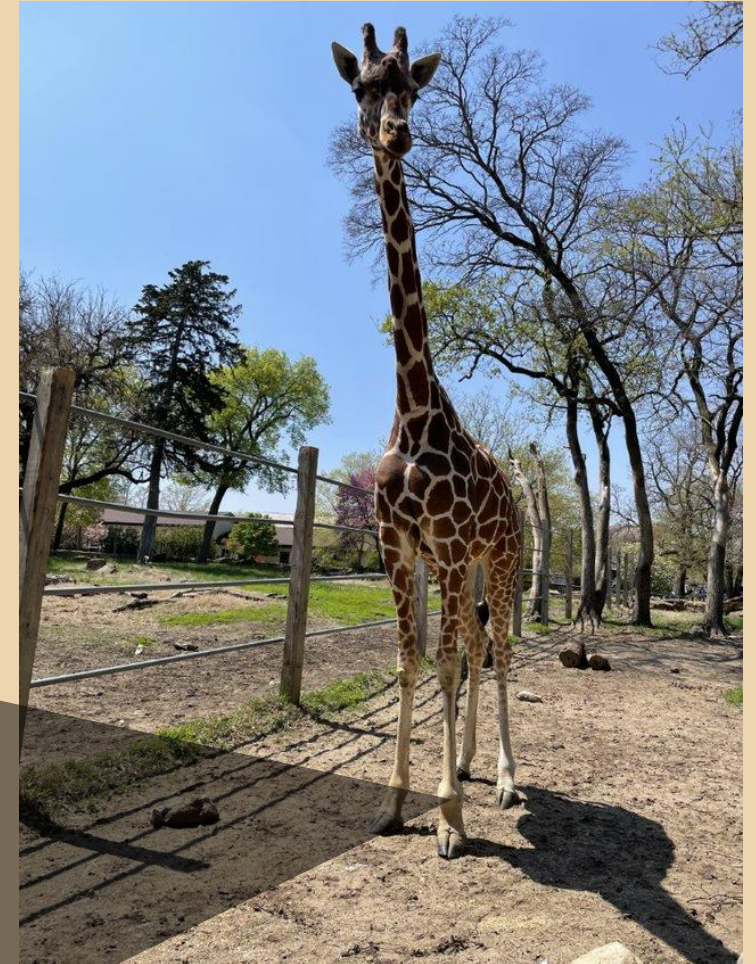
- Swelling of FL fetlock around (2019–2020)
  - Suspected trauma injury
  - Slight limp

## Goals

- Decrease swelling
- Training on medical participation

## Treatment

- Oral medication
- Cold laser therapy



# Condition

- Swelling of FL fetlock around (2019–2020)
  - Suspected trauma injury
  - Slight limp
- Radiographs showing suspensory desmopathy and bone defect (2021)
  - Training hoof care and voluntary procedures
  - Off-and-on limp/lameness

## Goals

- Trim hooves
- Promote comfort and stability
- Start welfare assessments

## Treatment

- Steroid injection, brace, ultrasound, aspiration, etc.
- Modified blocks





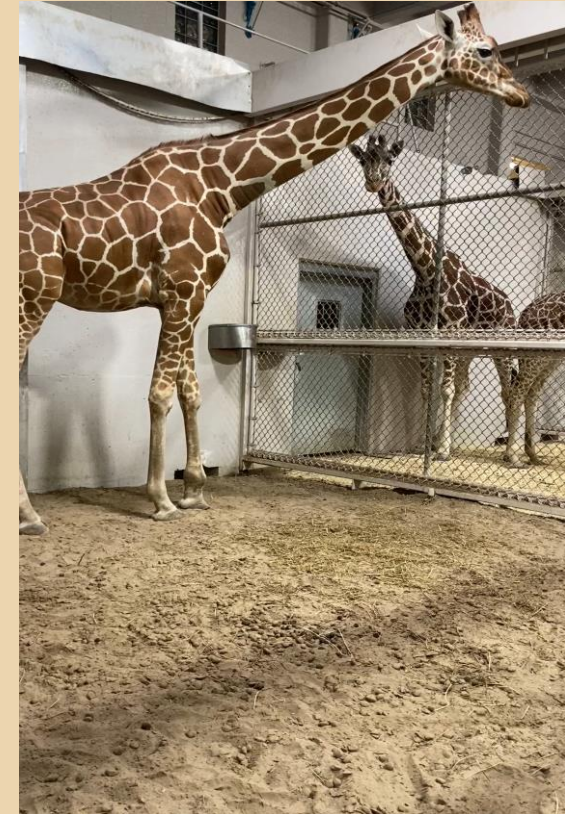
Right Front: Dec. 2021



Left Front: Dec. 2021

# Condition

- Swelling of FL fetlock around (2019-2020)
  - Suspected trauma injury
  - Slight limp
- Radiographs showing suspensory desmopathy and bone defect (2021)
  - Training hoof care and voluntary procedures
  - Of- and-on limp/lameness
- Visible “clicking” when walking (2022)
  - Unstable on that FL leg
  - Drastic decline within 4-month period



## Goals

- Increase rest
- Stabilize joint
- Start quality of life assessments

## Treatment

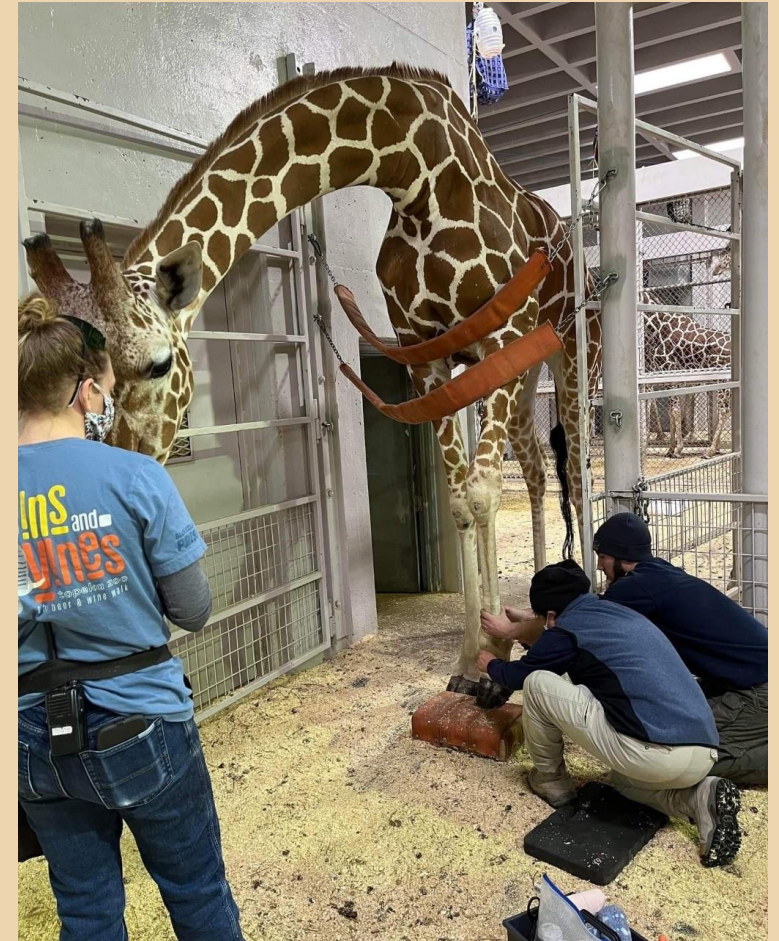
- Increase herd separation
- Surgery- full immobilization (Arthrodesis)
- Shoe placement (Sacramento)

# Goals- Keeper Staff

- Communication
  - Record keeping
  - Group chats/zoom calls for decisions and updates
- Appreciation for all ideas
  - All on same level
  - Compromise
- Mental Check-ins
  - Decompress with snacks and second-breakfast
  - Appreciate time off
- Collective decision
  - Each step

# Transparency

- Inside Zoo
  - No idea too small
  - All hands-on deck for training
- Public
  - Transparent and open as possible
  - Keeper chats, press releases, new signage
  - Public viewing for training





# Decline



- March 2022 X-rays: show bones “disappearing”
- April 2022: Assumed self-mutilation
  - Biting on chest at open wound
  - Possible side-effect of medication, self-induced, or habitat injury
- Drastic behavior change
  - Unwilling to participate in simple behaviors
  - Increased signs of frustration/aggression during training

## Goals

- Create 2-week timeline for drastic change or euthanasia

## Treatment

- Surgery and biopsy
- Euthanasia



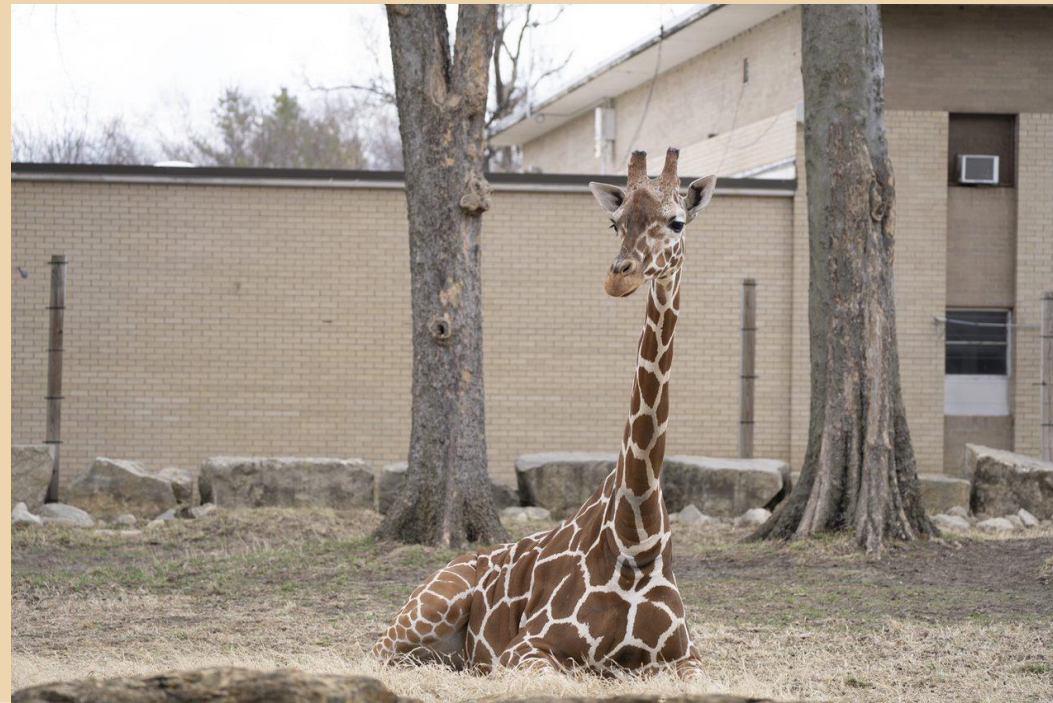
Left Front: Dec. 2021



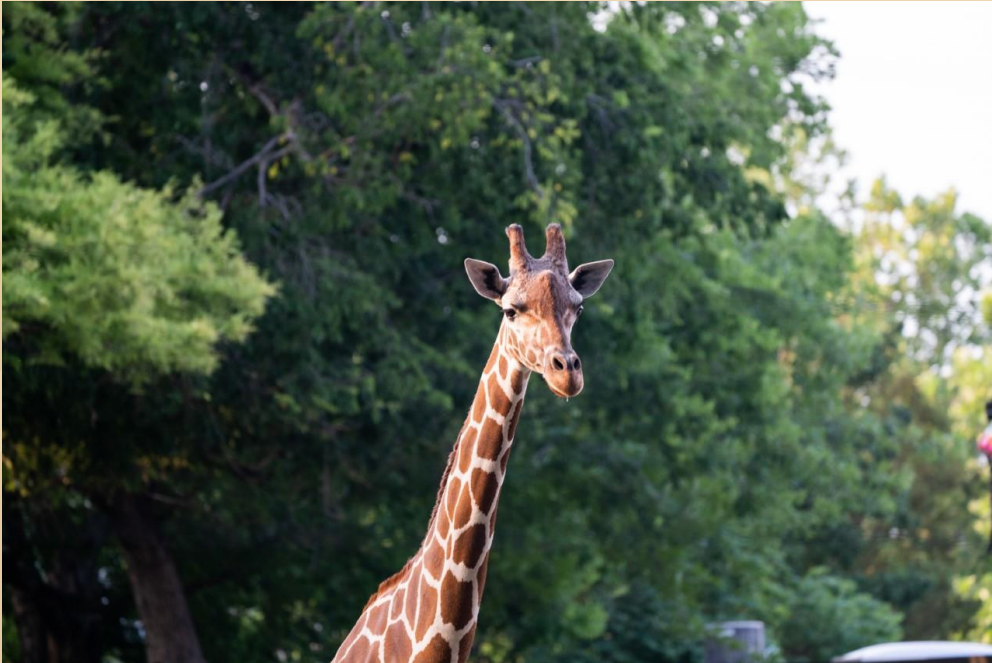
Left Front: May 2022

# Wellbeing

- Consistent decline in assessments
- Unable to immobilize with given resources and time
  - Exhibit out of date
  - Scheduling outside timeframe
- Showing drastic decline in 2-week timeframe
  - Limp and lameness
  - Quality of life



- Humanely euthanized (May 29, 2022)
  - Trained for voluntary injection
  - Full staff participation
- Tissue from fetlock sent off for biopsy
  - Suspected cancer, no results yet
  - **\*\*Necropsy photo ahead\*\***





# Conclusion

- **Strong connections**
  - Luxury of an extensive budget
- **Open and honest communication**
  - Not all on agreement 100% of the time
  - All ideas on same level
- **Establish common Goal**
  - Get her stable within each timeframe
  - Move on to next idea
- **Documenting consistent results**
  - Each new effort came with little improvement
- **Strict time frame**
  - Choice made with Abi in mind
  - No pushing the limit- no matter the available options

# Abi's Legacy

- New barn Oct. 2022
  - Made with full sedation in mind
  - Herd doing great
- Better trainers, better team
  - Hoof work and communication
- Made the right call, even when we haven't tried everything



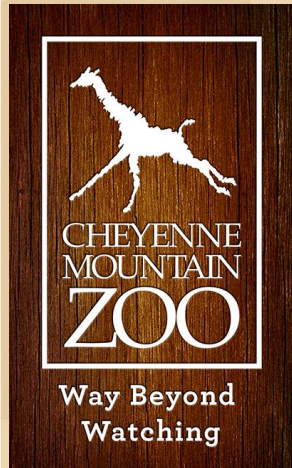


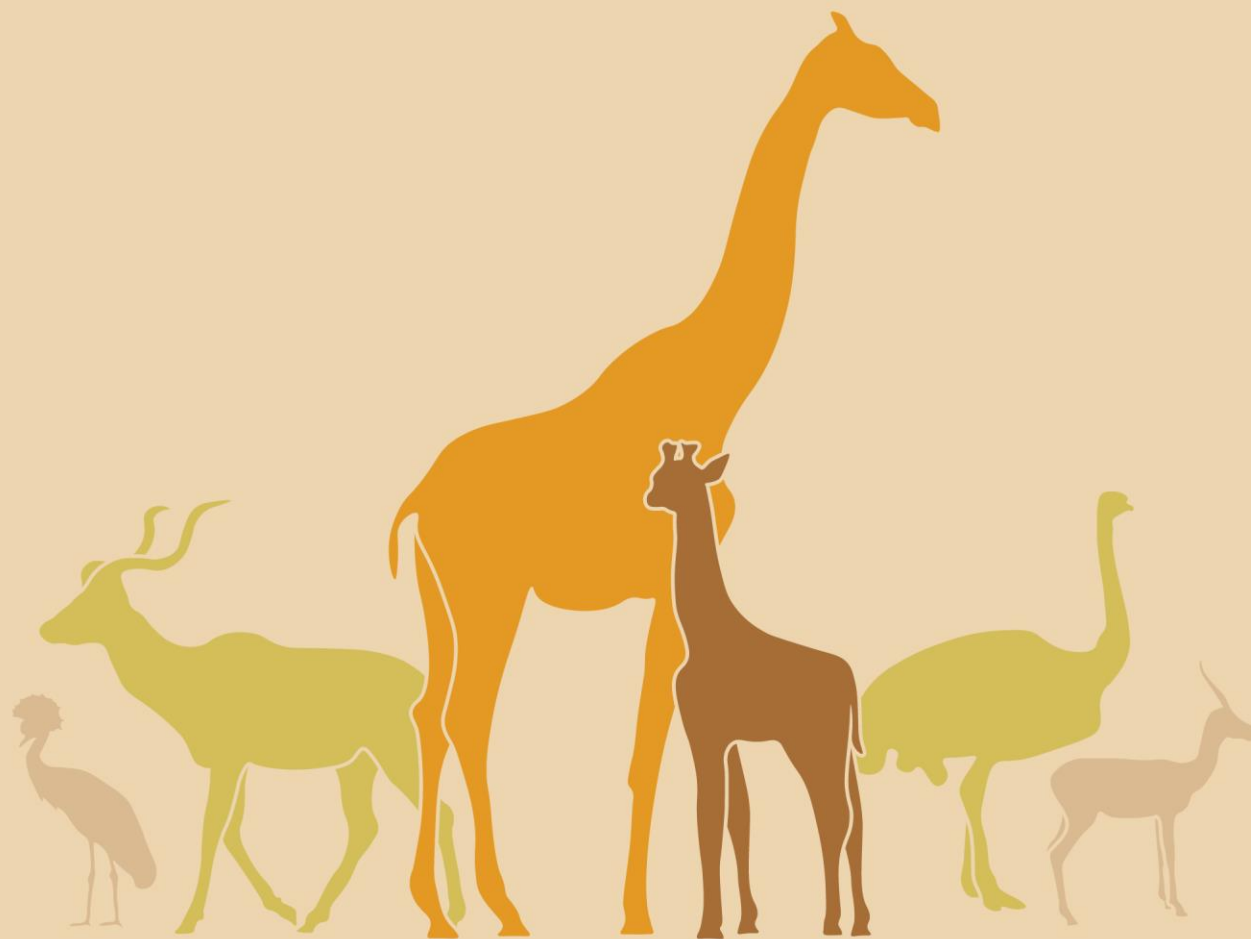




# Thank You

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- Dr. Dean Richardson, University of Pennsylvania
- Dr. Elizabeth Santchi (retired) and Dr. Matt Wimer, Kansas State University
- Dr. Jeff Zuba (retired), San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance
- Topeka Zoo Staff
  - Adrienne, Dalton, Braxton, Shannon, Sara, Wrylie
  - DVM Shirley Lizo
  - Stephanie Galbraith





# GIRAFFE & FRIENDS

**topeka zoo**  
& conservation center