

HANDREARING A HIPPOPOTAMUS (*HIPPOPOTAMUS AMPHIBIUS*): A RARE OPPORTUNITY FOR COLLABORATION

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Abstract

On January 24, 2017, Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden had a premature hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) calf (Fiona) born to a first-time mom (Bibi) on land weighing 29.6 lbs. After one and a half hours, Fiona was pulled due to no attempts to stand or nurse coupled with lack of maternal care; Fiona was cold to touch and needed supportive care. There were no recorded documents of hippo handrearing in the US to date. Gray (1959) published one sample of nutritional parameters from a hippo milked at eleven weeks of lactation. Using that as a base, a formula was devised and offered to Fiona after one day of offering pedialyte. Due to previous training, Bibi allowed milk collection. Most of the expressed milk was offered to Fiona; a small sample was collected for analyses. Milk collection continued through the first two weeks of lactation when Bibi appeared to end lactation, providing four subsamples for nutrient analyses. Samples were sent to the Milk Repository in the Department of Nutrition Science at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park and Conservation Biology Institute. Using the provided nutrient analyses, the formula was adjusted to more closely mimic dam's milk. The formula contained: water, Zoologic® milk matrix 33/40 and 42/25 with a small percent of a 50% dextrose solution. Due to premature birth and digestive issues the formula was offered at a diluted rate and increased slowly ensuring consistent weight gain. The final formula for digestion and growth was reached after three months of increasing concentration.

References

Gray, R.F. 1959. Hippopotamus Milk Analysis. J. Am. Inst. Par Exec. (Sept) p. 443. Int. Zoo. Yb, 1:46