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MADISON - Today, Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo announced that Keju, their six month old Bornean orangutan, will be moving to Zoo Atlanta. After Keju's birth, Kawan, Keju's mother, while showing good initial instincts and behavior towards the infant, became lethargic and did not feel well for several days after birth. This made it necessary for staff to step in and care for Keju 24 hours a day 7 days a week near Kawan and Datu, Keju's father, so the infant was always near them. Parental training continued with Datu and Kawan throughout the hand rear process. Both parents showed interest in Keju and Kawan and Keju were introduced together as soon as Kawan was feeling better.

While Kawan is very interested in Keju, she can become unsure what to do when Keju vocalizes loudly or moves rapidly towards her. It isn't unusual for first time orangutan mothers to be unsuccessful in some aspect of care of the infant since they haven't been through birth before and our birth plan addressed that possibility. Over time, staff at Henry Vilas Zoo have been able to have Kawan and Keju spend a large part of the day together but Kawan has not picked Keju up, even though she will be side by side and occasionally touch her.

Because there is an experienced surrogate available at another highly respected institution, after consulting with several other Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) institutions who had gone through a similar process with their infant and having three of the Orangutan (SSP) Steering Committee members come to assess the situation both before (to help with maternal and paternal training skills for staff) and after birth (to help with introduction assessments), the decision was made to move Keju to the surrogate female. Zoo Atlanta has a long history of success with orangutans and has been the site of several successful integrations of infants to a surrogate at their zoo.

“At Dane County Henry Vilas Zoo, our number one priority is the welfare of our animals,” said Ronda Schwetz, Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo Director. **“Keju's move to Zoo Atlanta will enable Keju a better chance at success being raised by an orangutan with a more experienced surrogate mother. This was not an easy decision. But our team and all of the Orangutan experts who evaluated Keju agree it is necessary and in the best interest of Keju.”**

The Orangutan SSP members all agreed Dane County's Henry Vilas Zoo staff did an outstanding job in a difficult situation and everything that could have been done to reunite the mother and infant was explored, leaving no other viable option for the infant to be reared by a mother that would hold Keju. The Orangutan SSP also realizes the value of not only this experience for Kawan which was invaluable for being successful in raising future offspring, but that this situation is not uncommon. To further facilitate success in the next birth, the SSP has identified a potential older, experienced mother orangutan that may be available to live at our zoo who would work well in the group with Datu and Kawan.

Henry Vilas Zoo is a member of Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which is the highest standard of animal welfare and husbandry in the country. There are only 230 AZA accredited institutions in North America. The AZA oversees all Species Survival Plans (SSP). Henry Vilas Zoo participates in all SSP recommendations and the Orangutan SSP recommended breeding Datu and Kawan in late 2014. Immediately after the recommendation, HVZ put together a birth plan for pre-during and post birth scenarios including a surrogate plan if that option was needed.

Shortly after the breeding recommendation, Kawan became pregnant and delivered Keju on April 9, 2015. Both Kawan and Datu participated in parental behavior skill training and outside partners including an OB/GYN and ultrasonographer to help monitor fetal development and further maternal training. Kawan was monitored 24/7 in the weeks up to her delivery and after the birth.

Formed in 1988, the Orangutan SSP is a group of dedicated professionals that works to advance the care of orangutans in zoological settings, to educate the public about critical issues facing orangutans, and to partner with other organizations that seek to improve the lives of wild and captive orangutans.

Since it was necessary to start hand rearing Keju according to the birth plan, Keju has been with human caretakers at all times, who model orangutan mother behavior, even wearing an orange felt vest for Keju to cling to. The Orangutan SSP strongly recommends this practice which HVZ has been doing 24/7, other than in prepping for and doing introductions with Keju and Kawan. Kawan, while interested in being near Keju while foraging and resting on the ground next to her, hasn't been willing to pick up Keju, which is one of the biggest reasons it was recommended to send Keju to a surrogate at another institution that would hold Keju. Zoo Atlanta is home to the nation's largest zoological collection of great apes, with a long history of success with orangutans, and has been the site of several successful integrations of infants to a surrogate at their zoo.