



Alabama's Must See Attraction!

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Birmingham Zoo Hopes to Breed Rhinos through Artificial Insemination

BIRMINGHAM, AL – The Birmingham Zoo is hopeful that through the process of artificial insemination, a new Southern White Rhinoceros could join the Zoo family. The Zoo has been home to Laptop and Ajabu, a mother and daughter pair since November 2008 when they moved to the Birmingham Zoo from the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Texas. Max, the Zoo's resident male rhinoceros was brought to the Birmingham Zoo in October 2012 from the Brevard Zoo through the Species Survival Plan Program, in efforts to breed with Laptop and or Ajabu.

Unfortunately, Max has not shown to be a successful breeder as neither Laptop nor Ajabu has become pregnant through the natural breeding process. Southern White Rhinos in Africa are experiencing a rapid decline from poaching and are close to being listed as endangered. In order to help with the conservation of Southern White Rhinos, the Birmingham Zoo has decided to proceed with an artificial insemination program.

This process has begun by monitoring the estrous cycle of the females through ultrasounds and hormone monitoring. Similar to the process in humans, Laptop and Ajabu will receive hormone injections to help with the timing of the insemination, which is planned to initially take place in June. Because Max has not bred before, he is genetically valuable. Max will be anesthetized and a semen collection will take place. The sample will be assessed and, if viable, will be used

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to attempt impregnation of the females. Should Max not produce a viable sample, the Zoo has secured a frozen back-up sample to be used in its place.

Once the females have been inseminated, they will be monitored via ultrasound, and fecal and blood hormone tests to check for pregnancy.

While artificial insemination is a proven technique in many species, the process is less developed in rhinos, with only a handful of calves being produced through AI. Regardless, the Birmingham Zoo is remaining hopeful through the process. "Through scientific study, advances in reproductive technology, and our expertise in animal care, we are remaining optimistic throughout this process. We hope to contribute information to future rhino reproduction efforts," says Birmingham Zoo Director of Animal Health, Dr. Stephanie McCain, DVM, dipl ACZM.

Approximately 900 animals of 230 species call the Birmingham Zoo home, including sea lions, zebras, rhinos and endangered species from six continents. The Birmingham Zoo is open daily from 9am to 5pm. Regular admission is \$16 for adults and \$14* for senior citizens and military and \$11* for children ages 2-12 (*Price not including tax). All Birmingham Zoo Members and children under two-years-old receive free admission.*

For more information about the Birmingham Zoo, please visit the Zoo on Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Twitter, or at birminghamzoo.com.

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