

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Binder Park Zoo
7400 Division Drive
Battle Creek, MI 49014
269.979-1351
www.binderparkzoo.org



Eastern Equine Encephalitis confirmed in zoo's Mexican gray wolf

Battle Creek, MI, Sept. 25, 2019: Binder Park Zoo received test results that confirmed Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) as the cause of death in two Mexican gray wolf pups at the zoo. The results confirming EEE as the cause of death in a second pup were received late Tuesday. Both died during the first weekend in September. These pups were part of a litter born to a breeding pair of Mexican gray wolves on June 14 at the zoo - a Species Survival Plan (SSP) breeding recommendation through the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). The surviving wolf pup and both parents appear healthy and are being monitored closely by the veterinarian and animal care staff.

"Although EEE infection in canines is very, very rare, there have been a few cases previously reported in domestic dog puppies. All species considered highly susceptible to EEE infection at the zoo, including domestic and non-domestic equine species and ostriches, are vaccinated on a yearly basis." stated Dr. Kim Thompson, staff veterinarian at Binder Park Zoo

"Zoos have a wide range of species and can be important indicators for detecting diseases in an area. All animals at Binder Park Zoo that die have a complete necropsy and any additional disease testing performed by a veterinarian to determine the cause of death. As such, it's not uncommon for a zoo veterinarian to detect a new disease in an area. In fact, a zoo veterinarian was the first to detect West Nile Virus after it entered the United States many years ago." according to Dr. Thompson.

EEE is carried by certain types of mosquitoes in Michigan and is a potentially serious disease in primarily humans and equines. Higher risk areas are those with standing water---such as swamps and bogs. Wearing insect repellent when outdoors, especially at dawn and dusk is important to prevent EEE. Binder Park Zoo is working with local agencies and will be evaluating the zoo and identifying potential areas for treatment of adult mosquitos. The zoo will also be providing visitors with access to courtesy "Bug Spray Stations" throughout the zoo, to encourage people to stay safe when outdoors.

According to the website www.michigan.gov Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEE) has infected seven Michigan residents with three fatalities. EEE has also infected animals including nine horses, five deer and one donkey so far this year.

The Mexican gray wolf is the rarest subspecies of gray wolf, with only 131 counted in the wild in 2018. The zoo is greatly saddened by the recent and sudden loss of these two pups, as they were important to

the future of the Mexican wolf. Also referred to as "lobo", they are the most highly endangered subspecies of the gray wolf. Binder Park Zoo has been an active participant in the Mexican gray wolf SSP since 1992 and in 1998 a female wolf named "Dark Eyes" born at the zoo was released into the Apache National Forest in eastern Arizona by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Dark Eyes became the first Mexican gray wolf to give birth to pups in the wild in over 50 years.

###