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NEWS RELEASE

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Death of Two Giraffes from Molokai Ranch

Two giraffes, Momi (16-years-old) and Maika'i (10-years-old), being transferred from the Molokai Ranch Wildlife Conservation Park to the Maui Keiki Zoo died during preparation for shipment. The State Department of Agriculture and a Molokai Ranch veterinarian are attempting to determine why the two giraffes, who were in good physical condition, died unexpectedly. The giraffes had entered shipping crates without incident and were sedated to minimize stress by the Molokai Ranch veterinarian. Subsequently, the giraffes were skin tested for tuberculosis and a blood sample for brucellosis and anaplasmosis was collected by a deputy state veterinarian. Both veterinarians indicated the procedures went smoothly and without complications. However, several hours after completion of capture and testing, while the giraffes were being repositioned for transport, Momi collapsed in the container and ceased breathing. Attempts by the Molokai Ranch veterinarian to revive Momi were unsuccessful. Shortly thereafter, Maika'i, the smaller giraffe, lay down in the container and was unable to rise. She was immediately removed from the container under veterinary supervision to make it easier for her to rise. Attempts to get her to rise and subsequent medical treatments were unsuccessful.

Autopsies were conducted on the giraffes in an attempt to determine the cause of death. Preliminary results did not reveal any obvious disease process. Laboratory examination of tissue samples taken during the autopsies should be complete within one to two weeks.

The testing requirements for movement of the giraffes to Maui were put in place by the Board of Agriculture to insure that important diseases, especially bovine tuberculosis were absent in these animals. Bovine tuberculosis is a contagious disease of livestock that may affect exotic animals, wildlife or humans. Molokai has a 60-year history of recurrent bovine tuberculosis infections and safeguards such as pre-movement testing are necessary to prevent its spread to other islands.

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