



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Julia N Allen, PhD, DVM, Friends of Woodland Park Zoo
Elephants, 206-281-0988, DrJNA@comcast.net
Alyne Fortgang, Co-founder, Friends of Woodland Park Zoo Elephants,
206-595-7770, wpzelephants@yahoo.com, www.freeWPZelevhants.org

Seattle Group Files Complaint with Oklahoma State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners over Death of Elephant

Seattle, WA (April 6, 2016) – Friends of Woodland Park Zoo Elephants (Friends), a Seattle-based animal advocacy group, submitted a complaint today with the Oklahoma State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners over the premature death of elephant, Chai, in January at Oklahoma City Zoo (OCZ). The complaint alleges that OCZ violated the Oklahoma Veterinary Practice Act by not providing adequate veterinary care to Chai. Friends is asking the Board to investigate Chai's care, which was supervised by Dr. Jennifer D'Agostino, Director of Veterinary Services at OCZ. Chai's death comes just eight months after she and Bamboo were shipped from Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo to Oklahoma.

Friends alleges that Chai's inadequate care may have violated provisions of the Oklahoma Veterinary Practice Act in the following areas:

- Negligence in the practice of veterinary medicine
- Substandard care
- Careless disregard for health, welfare, or safety
- Inadequate record keeping
- The use of false or deceptive statements in any document connected with the practice of veterinary medicine
- Conduct likely to deceive the public

In announcing Chai's death, OCZ stated in a press release that "Chai received regular [veterinary] wellness checkups [...] and seemed to be healthy." However, Chai's medical and keeper records tell a different story: Chai suffered from precipitous weight loss and emaciation, shed high levels of the same herpes virus that recently killed another elephant at OCZ, had difficulty getting up on four occasions (two occasions required a hoist), had persistent toxic cells in her blood that are commonly associated with a bacterial infection in the bloodstream, and suffered from 25 clearly visible untreated pus-filled abscesses, among other health problems. "All of these issues are indications that something was seriously wrong with Chai," said Dr. Julia N. Allen, a veterinarian and Friends volunteer. "As a licensed veterinarian, Dr. D'Agostino should have recognized them as warning signs."

Friends is asking the Oklahoma Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners to conduct an impartial and thorough investigation and take appropriate action. “Based on the appearance that Chai received sub-standard care under Dr. D’Agostino, we have grave concerns about the level of care Bamboo is receiving for her captivity related medical issues—as well as the health of the other elephants,” said Alyne Fortgang, Co-founder of Friends. “It’s time that these elephants are retired to a sanctuary where they could heal physically and psychologically.”

Link to Complaint Introduction:

http://www.freewpzelephants.org/docs/Complaint_Intro_OK_Vet_Examiner.pdf

Link to Complaint Summary of Medical Facts and Concerns:

http://freewpzelephants.org/docs/Summary_Medical_Facts_Concerns_Chai.pdf

Supporting medical records and keeper logs are available upon request.

###