



13 July 2022

## Press release

# A sad loss for the Tierpark

## Sumatran tiger Kiara is put to sleep after rapid deterioration in health

Sumatran tigers are some of the rarest cats on Earth. Since the 1950s, Tierpark Berlin has been successfully breeding this critically endangered species in efforts to ensure its survival in the long term. Sadly, however, the last cubs to be born here four years ago all had knee misalignments that resulted in mobility problems. Scientists were able to trace the cause of the condition back to a genetic disease carried by the cubs' father, who has since died. Following their diagnosis, the quadruplets have remained under the observation of veterinarians. Tragically, in recent days, the health of young female Kiara deteriorated so drastically that the decision was made to put her to sleep.

When Sumatran tiger female Mayang gave birth to four cubs in the summer of 2018, it was initially a joyous occasion for the Tierpark. However, celebrations were dampened when the cubs began to display abnormalities in their gait. In late 2019, CT scans conducted at the neighbouring Leibniz Institute for Zoological and Wildlife Research (IZW) confirmed that the Sumatran tiger quadruplets all had knee misalignments that were damaging the young tigers' cartilage and causing their hind legs to buckle when they walked. Despite trying various treatments, the vets have observed no significant improvement so far. "The welfare of our animals is our top priority," stresses Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "Since learning the diagnosis of knee misalignment, we have continuously monitored the health of our tiger quadruplets. We are in constant contact with our colleagues at the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research, who advise us in difficult situations such as this."

Recently, young female Kiara started displaying unusual behaviour. Over the past few days, she stopped eating and drinking entirely, and the animal keepers and veterinarians could clearly see that she was not doing well. She was therefore taken to the IZW for further examination. "I have been monitoring Kiara's health for two years now, and our colleagues at the IZW have known her since she was born," says Tierpark veterinarian Anja Hantschmann. "Based on the latest results, we all agreed that she was in pain and would continue to suffer in the future. There is no way to treat her condition. The decision to put her out of her misery was very, very difficult for all of us – but it was the only right thing to do."

Following discovery of the quadruplets' condition, their mother Mayang (11) also underwent clinical and genetic tests last year. Fortunately, she did not show any



signs of having a hereditary condition. Extensive analyses conducted at the IZW and the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover showed that the cubs' health problems were passed on from their father Harfan, who died in September 2020. Based on this information and following consultation with the IZW and other external experts from the Sumatran tiger Global Species Management Plan (GSMP) and European Endangered Species Programme (EEP), it was agreed that Mayang was fit for further breeding – and a suitable partner was found for her in the Tierpark's new male tiger Jae Jae. "The health of Kiara's three siblings has remained unchanged," adds Tierpark curator Matthias Papies. "However, the deterioration of Kiara's health has prompted us to consult once again with external experts on the best way to proceed."