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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement from the Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium

Leopard in custody from Zanesville incident euthanized after injury

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (January 30, 2012) - The Ohio Department of Agriculture and the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium today announced that a male spotted leopard from the Thompson farm in Zanesville was euthanized on Sunday afternoon after sustaining an injury. The animal was in quarantine at the Zoo's Animal Health Center under orders from the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

At about 11 a.m. on Jan. 29, a Columbus Zoo keeper was moving the leopard between enclosures to conduct routine feeding and cleaning procedures. The leopard moved through the opening but then unexpectedly darted back as the door was being lowered, striking it on the neck.

Responding immediately, a Zoo veterinarian found the cat to be unresponsive and began chest compressions to get its heart beating. Upon examination it was determined that the animal had suffered an irreversible spinal cord injury, was unable to breathe on its own, and State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey, who had responded and was on-site to observe the animal, made the decision to euthanize the leopard.

Radiographs from before and after the animal's death indicated the leopard had congenitally defective malformed vertebrae in the neck which weakened its cervical spine and could have compounded the severity of the injury. The leopard also had old injuries that had not healed properly including broken bones in its back and tail.

The leopard's body was taken to the Animal Disease and Diagnostic Laboratory at the Ohio Department of Agriculture where a gross necropsy (animal autopsy) was performed this morning. Full necropsy results will likely not be available for 4-6 weeks.

The leopard was one of six animals transported to the Columbus Zoo and Aquarium after Terry Thompson released 56 animals from his Zanesville property on Oct. 18, 2011. The Zoo continues to care for one other spotted leopard, one black leopard, two Celebes macaques, and one brown bear.

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