

BYE-BYE BEARS:

Calgary Zoo returning pandas to China due to bamboo barriers

BILL GRAVELAND
The Canadian Press

CALGARY

The Calgary Zoo will be returning two giant pandas on loan from China because a scarcity of flights due to COVID-19 has caused problems with getting enough bamboo to feed them.

Er Shun and Da Mao arrived in Calgary in 2018 after spending five years at the Toronto Zoo and were to remain in the Alberta city until 2023.

The zoo's president, Clement Lanthier, said the facility spent months trying to overcome transportation barriers in acquiring fresh bamboo and decided it's best for the animals to be in China, where their main food source is abundant.

"It's about the animals. At the end of the day, we cannot pretend that we care for animals if we don't take those tough decisions," Lanthier said Tuesday.

"We believe the best and safest place for Er Shun and Da Mao to be during these challenging and unprecedented times is where bamboo is abundant and easy to access."

Lanthier said the zoo had contingency plans for a steady supply of fresh bamboo, but limits on flights from China was the first problem. Transporting more from California added even more frustrations.

"Every week, every 10 days there is more and more problem moving bamboo to Calgary. This risk is unacceptable. We don't feel comfortable at all that we can



CP FILE PHOTO

Da Mao, an adult male panda bear, looks on at the Calgary Zoo during the opening of its giant panda habitat, Panda Passage, in Calgary on May 7, 2018. The Calgary Zoo will be returning two giant pandas on loan from China because the COVID-19 pandemic has caused problems with getting enough bamboo to feed them.

impose that risk on the health and the welfare of the pandas."

Lanthier said the animals didn't like some kinds of bamboo and other supplies that arrived were past their expiry point.

Giant pandas have unique nutritional requirements and 99 per cent of their diet is made up of fresh bamboo. Each adult consumes about 40 kilograms daily.

Lanthier said the news came as a bit of a shock to the Chinese

government. In other locations where pandas are exhibited - such as France, Spain and parts of Asia - bamboo can be grown locally.

He said the pandas had been one of the biggest draws at the Calgary Zoo, but the decision wasn't one about business.

"It's based on animal welfare. I cannot imagine if one day, two days, three days in a row I am unable to provide the bamboo.

That would be catastrophic."

There's no date for when the pandas will return home. Lanthier doesn't want the Canadian and Chinese governments to delay things.

"We need the federal government and the Chinese government to expedite the permit process, so we can move them back to where this risk of not getting their next meal will be managed differently."

TSB urges new way to test train brakes as probe into fatal B.C. crash continues

The Canadian Press

CALGARY

The Transportation Safety Board says there should be a better way of determining whether a train's brakes are working as they should.

The agency wrote to Transport Canada last month asking what it intends to do about shortcomings with the current method for testing air brakes.

The issue came up during the board's ongoing investigation into a Canadian Pacific train derailment near Field, B.C., that killed three railroaders last year.

The agency says that train passed the No. 1 brake test in Calgary before it set out on the fatal trip.

The No. 1 test is meant to verify that at least 95 per cent of a train's air brakes are operative, but does not physically measure their force or effect.

The safety board says research comparing brake testing methods, along with concerns flagged by Canadian Pacific employees before the Field derailment, suggest the No. 1 brake test is not reliable.

"Given this information, Transport Canada is advised that an alternate approach to determining the effectiveness of freight car air brakes is required to ensure that departing trains have sufficient effective brakes to operate safely," the board wrote in its April 17 letter.

"The TSB would appreciate being advised of TC's position on this issue, and what action, if any, will be taken in this

regard."

The Vancouver-bound Canadian Pacific grain train was stopped on a mountain slope in the frigid early-morning hours of Feb. 4, 2019, when it began moving on its own, sped down a treacherous hill in Yoho National Park and plummeted from a bridge over the Kicking Horse River.

Conductor Dylan Paradis, engineer Andrew Dockrell and trainee Daniel Waldenberger-Bulmer died.

Ninety-nine of the train's 112 cars and two of its three locomotives derailed.

The train's previous crew had been unable to control its speed and brought it to an emergency stop before the crash, the safety board said.

The agency noted in its letter that Transport Canada, the National Research Council and Canadian Pacific began a research project in 2015 looking at an air-brake test called automated train brake effectiveness.

Researchers examined wheel temperature data from detectors at the bottom of big hills where prolonged applications of air brakes were needed to control train speed.

Early results in 2016 found a high frequency of grain cars with cold wheels were under-braking.

Researchers then compared that test with the No. 1 brake test on 44 grain trains. The testing being researched found 695 cars with ineffective brakes, whereas the No. 1 brake test only found five.

WestJet cancels most of its flights until July

The Canadian Press

WestJet Airlines Ltd. is extending its suspension of thousands of flights by another four weeks until July 4 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Calgary-based carrier is halting all U.S. and international flights, as well as more than 40 domestic routes as travel controls and public health concerns continue to choke off demand.

The latest round of schedule scrubbing follows WestJet's announcement on April 22 to suspend some 18,000 flights between May 5 and June 4 amid record-low passenger numbers.

Air Canada cancelled all flights to the United States late last month after Ottawa extended its U.S. border closure by 30 days, with most international flights also halted and seat capacity down more than 90 per cent.

Air Transat, Porter Airlines and Sunwing Airlines Ltd. have cancelled all trips until late June.

The International Air Transport Association predicts global revenues will fall by US\$314 billion this year, or 55 per cent, from 2019.

Body of man pulled from B.C. river

The Canadian Press

The body of a 22-year-old man who was last seen swimming with friends in a Chilliwack, B.C., river has been found.

RCMP say the man's friends reported he entered the Vedder River on Monday and became distressed. Police say the friends tried to pull the man from the water without success.

The body was discovered by Chilliwack Search and Rescue crews on Tuesday.

Better Business Bureau warns online puppy scams surging during COVID

The Canadian Press

VANCOUVER

The Better Business Bureau says puppy scams are the latest way fraudsters are taking advantage of lonely, isolated people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A statement from the Better Business Bureau serving Mainland British Columbia says online puppy scams have spiked since the pandemic reached North America.

The bureau says consumer assistance organizations across the country have received more reports about fraudulent pet websites in April than in the first three months of the year combined.

Karla Laird, the spokeswoman for bureau serving Mainland B.C., says scammers are taking advantage of the desire of would-be pet owners to find joy during difficult times.

She says people from Victoria to Toronto and Halifax have reported being victimized while trying to buy a puppy online.

The Better Business Bureau has several tips to guard against the scams, including never to buy a pet without seeing it in person and not to send payments by Western Union, Moneygram or gift cards.

An earlier study of puppy frauds conducted by the bureau found the most successful scams depend sophisticated advertisements to hook unsuspecting consumers.

"Experts believed that that time, that at least 80 per cent of the sponsored advertising links that appear in an internet search for pets may be fraudulent," a statement from the BBB says.

It points to one website claiming to be based in Tulsa, Okla., that specifically targets people trying to buy dogs from the Cavalier King Charles Spaniel breed.

Would-be buyers are advised to check when the website was created and whether any logos or links are authentic.

"Some of the most common traits of scam websites during the pandemic are the fact that they have no online footprint or history, the social media links are not active or not working and the websites were launched between February to April of this year," the bureau warns.

Pet owners should research prices for the breed they are interested in adopting, says the bureau.

If a purebred dog is advertised for free or at a deeply discounted price, and then other payment is required for services like vaccination or shipping, it could be a fraudulent offer, it says.

If you are new to Medicine Hat, Dunmore, Redcliff or Ralston or know of someone who is please call

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CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS AND COVID-19 PRACTICES

Medicine Hat – City Council will meet as scheduled on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 at 6:30 p.m. with adjustments in place to ensure alignment with current Alberta Health restrictions related to COVID-19.

A new Ministerial Order allowing municipalities to host meetings of Council electronically to ensure recommended practices from Alberta Health was announced on March 20, 2020. As per the order, Council meetings will be closed to the public but can be viewed online at the City website at: <https://docs.medicinehat.ca/onbaseagendaonline>

Remote participation options for Public Hearings are available. Those who would like to ask questions can do so via email to clerk@medicinehat.ca between 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. on the day of the hearing. Additionally, the public may call in to the Public Hearing via teleconference at 1-833-353-8610 (participant code 2848289.)

The Mayor will be available for media questions on the conference line once the meeting is adjourned.

Dated at the City of Medicine Hat, in the Province of Alberta, this 13th day of May, 2020.

Angela Cruickshank, City Clerk
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E-mail: clerk@medicinehat.ca

www.medicinehat.ca

DR. OCKERT KRUGER

General Practitioner

Dr. Ockert Kruger is moving his practice to HealthWORX Medical Clinic. He will be available at HealthWORX from Monday May 4th, 2020. Please call 403.580.1882 to book an appointment.



Bay 3, 2020 Strachan Road SE • 403-580-1882