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Jamie S. Jonker, Ph.D.
Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources
The National Academies
500 Fifth Street, N.W.
680 Keck Center
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Dr. Jonker

With this letter I would like to commend the veterinary staff at the Smithsonian Zoological Park (The National Zoo).

I have worked as a consultant with the National Zoo veterinary staff over the past 6 years. I have traveled to the zoo and spent time with the veterinary staff both in the clinic setting and throughout the grounds, providing consultation in internal medicine and ultrasonography. I directly observed the level of veterinary expertise, dedication and compassion provided to several of the cases mentioned recently in the Washington Post articles, such as the Giant Panda, the African elephant and the Orangutan, as well as many, many others.

The patients at the National Zoo are cared for by an excellent veterinary staff. Unlike clinical practice, where the number of cases presenting to a veterinarian can be limited by the appointments scheduled, the zoo veterinary staff must respond to each and every sick animal on the zoo grounds. That is an overwhelming task. This veterinary staff responded by working long hours, including weekends and evenings, to provide the best medical care possible. This also included bringing in outside veterinary expertise where applicable. I was especially impressed during those visits by the level of cohesiveness amongst the veterinary staff and animal caretakers, the depth of discussion of cases during morning rounds, and the attention to detail each case was given.

I honestly feel that there is no more dedicated veterinary staff than at the National Zoo. Additionally, the level of veterinary expertise is excellent, as reflected by the number of board certified specialists on staff. I would be happy to provide further information if you desire.

Sincerely,

Autumn Davidson DVM, MS
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Internal
Medicine