

Private Bag 3010  
Hamilton 3240  
New Zealand

Phone 07 838 6720  
zooinfo@hcc.govt.nz  
[www.hamiltonzoo.co.nz](http://www.hamiltonzoo.co.nz)

9 June 2016

Greetings zoo colleagues,

As you will be aware, Hamilton City Council – as operator of Hamilton Zoo – has been prosecuted by Worksafe New Zealand following the death of our Zoo Curator, Samantha Kudeweh, in September 2015.

Many of you will have met and worked with Sam, and although we are looking to appoint a new Zoo Curator, we will never find another one like Sam. She is greatly missed and we have an artist working on a bronze statue of a white rhinoceros calf to go in the zoo as a permanent memorial for her. She was a passionate and gifted conservationist and zoo professional.

The purpose of this email is to inform you of the Council's decision to plead guilty to the Worksafe charge that Council did not take all practical steps to keep Sam safe while she was at work. Although we felt our tiger management systems and processes were adequate, and met MPI standards, there is more that we could have done to ensure staff were safe in the event of human error – particularly those managing dangerous animals. It is no longer enough to rely on procedures as people make mistakes. We therefore need to identify engineered solutions that prevent human error resulting in staff ending up in the same space as a dangerous animal.

The Council's lawyers have entered the guilty plea at Hamilton District Court in the last few minutes, and a significant amount of media coverage is expected throughout today and over the next days. It is very feasible your zoos will be contacted for comment by your local media.

Our Council will hold a media conference at 12pm today, with Chief Executive Richard Briggs and General Manager Lance Vervoort our spokespeople on this. There will be a media statement available on our website from 12pm.

We want you to be aware of the various changes we have made to tiger management at our zoo.

They are:

- 1) Implementation of a two-keeper system for the management of dangerous animals including our Sumatran tigers and other dangerous animals such as chimpanzees.
- 2) We have shifted the enclosure double-gate entry porch to a position beside the last animal transfer race gate to allow easier checking by the keeper before entering the exhibit.

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- 3) Fitted mechanical interlock devices to the main keeper entry gate to the enclosure, i.e. the keeper cannot enter the safety porch if the last animal sliding gate into the exhibit is in the open position.
  - 4) Painted the counterweights on the cat chute gates a bright colour so they are more visible to keepers.
  - 5) We will be installing CCTV and an electronic gate monitoring system to give staff further means to check which safety gates are open or shut.
  - 6) Erected signage at the keeper gates reminding staff to double-check that the tigers are secured.
  - 7) Implemented more frequent auditing of keeper routines.

We continue to review and monitor our management of tigers and other dangerous animals at our zoo, to ensure we can provide the safest possible working environment for our staff and at the same time not compromising the experience we deliver to zoo visitors every year.

We are aware the international zoo sector has been watching this situation closely, and we will be sharing the knowledge gained from Samantha's death with our colleagues at other zoos.

Kind regards



Stephen Standley  
ZOO DIRECTOR  
Hamilton City Council