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# Media Release

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## Tiny Tamarin Survives Odds - 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2006

Following an uncertain start to life, Mogo Zoo is celebrating the survival of an infant cotton-top tamarin.

Icara, the Zoo's only breeding female and first-time mother, gave birth to three infants, including one still-born, on the 15<sup>th</sup> February, 2006. However, being the first litter for parents, Icara and Truman, both were lacking in parental experience. Unfortunately, the infants did not receive sufficient food resulting in a loss of strength. As the infants became weak, their inability to grasp onto their mother's back resulted in the infants falling to the ground.

This unfortunate outcome is a common occurrence amongst first-time parents, both in the wild and in captivity.

Taking into consideration the endangered status of the cotton-top tamarin, keepers made the decision to intervene and took-over the care of the weaker twin, leaving the stronger infant with its mother under close supervision. However, ironically, the stronger twin did not survive.

Keeper, Hannelie Van Der Merwe, is surrogate mother to the surviving female infant named 'Cupee'.

Hannelie has had extensive experience in hand-rearing wildlife ranging from the petite (bush baby) to the large (giraffe). Having only recently arrived from South Africa in December 2005, Hannelie's knowledge and expertise in this field has proved invaluable.

When hand-rearing young, the same conditions that are present when a biological mother nurtures her infant, are simulated. The infant is placed on a long-haired plush toy (simulating its mother), on top of a heating pad. This heating is necessary as cotton-top tamarins cannot retain their own body heat.



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The feeding process involves administering baby formula to the infant initially every three hours over a twenty-four hour period. After feeding, the infant's bodily functions require stimulation in order to encourage urination and defecation.

The infant also requires exposure to sunshine on a daily basis.

Cupee is now three weeks' old and has made significant progress, however, for keeper, Hannelie Van Der Merwe, the journey is far from complete. "Hand-rearing and the reintroduction of any animal, takes time and copious quantities of patience" Hannelie said.

Following the weaning process at approximately three to four months of age, Cupee will be reintroduced back into her natal family group. This process will involve placing Cupee into a box within her family's exhibit for short periods throughout the day. Gradually, the period of time spent in the exhibit will be increased until mutual acceptance is achieved. Cupee will then remain with the family group indefinitely.

As parental care is learned in cotton-top tamarins, it is intended that Cupee will form part of a breeding colony so that she can assist her parents with rearing any future siblings. This is a crucial element in the reintroduction process as it will enable Cupee to gain sibling-rearing experience before rearing her own young.

The cotton-top tamarin inhabits a small area in Northwest Colombia in a range bound by the Cauca and Magdalena Rivers and the Atlantic coast.

This species is currently endangered and it is estimated that fewer than 2,500 mature individuals remain in the wild.

Corinne Wells, **Mogo Zoo**