

San Diego wild animal park euthanizes baby elephant

by Jeanette Steele - CNS

SAN DIEGO - A two-month-old elephant was euthanized at the San Diego Zoo's Wild Animal Park Monday, after struggling since its birth Nov. 28. The calf has lesions with the same antibiotic-resistant staph infection reported in three park employees.

Park officials said they don't know which species got the bacteria first, but all three infected employees had contact with the sick elephant.

The baby elephant was underweight because it wasn't getting enough milk from its mother, Lungile, who had complications from the birth. Zoo officials had the little pachyderm and its mom under 24-hour care.

Still, "the calf did not transition well from mother's milk to formula and developed secondary complications from malnourishment," according to a statement zoo officials sent to employees Monday.

Three employees have been diagnosed with the staph infection, which is resistant to certain antibiotics, San Diego County officials said Monday night.

Officials are waiting for the results of tests on three other employees who also may have been infected in an area that is off-limits to the public at the park, said officials from the county Health and Human Services Agency.

Staph bacteria can lead to skin infections that resemble a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful or have pus. More serious infections may cause pneumonia or bloodstream infections. Most staph infections are treatable with antibiotics.

Steps have been taken to contain the outbreak, which is not expected to affect the park's operations, officials said.

Jose Luis Jimenez contributed to this report.

San Diego wild animal park euthanizes baby elephant by Jeanette Steele - CNS