

Lincoln Park Zoo wants you to choose names for takin babies

BY LEEANN SHELTON Staff Reporter February 14, 2013 2:40AM

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A newborn takin explores its home at Lincoln Park Zoo on Wednesday. | Christopher Bijalba-Lincoln Park Zoo photo

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How does "superior handsomeness" strike your fancy as a baby name? Maybe "happy good fortune"?

That's exactly what Lincoln Park Zoo curators want to know. They're holding a contest to name two Sichuan takins born at the North Side zoo earlier this year.

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"They're definitely very curious about each other right off the bat, and they're just so much fun," said Sharon Dewar, zoo's public relations director.

Sichuan takins are a type of large goat antelope. They weigh up to 600 pounds when they reach their adult height of about four feet.

The newborns share a father, 6-year-old Quanli. One calf was born to first-time mom Mei Li, 5, on Jan. 31. Jinse, 8, welcomed her second calf nine days later.

Both calves already are sporting the species' characteristic thick, wooly fur — perfect for a chilly Chicago February.

(CONTINUED NEXT PAGE)

"This specific species is actually from a colder mountainous range in China, so this sort of climate is when they're most comfortable," Dewar said. "You're going to see them out romping around in the snow. They tend to enjoy this time of year quite a lot."

The zoo is inviting people to vote on a list of six Mandarin names inspired by the takins' natural habitat.

Will it be Mengayo, meaning "superior happiness"? Or Xing Fu, which translates as "happy good fortune?"

Visitors are invited to vote at the Name the Takins page at www.lpzoo.org. The results will be announced Feb. 20 on the zoo's Facebook page.

Though hardy animals, the takin species is classified as vulnerable. Only 90 of the shaggy, cloven-hooved takins live in zoos in the U.S., and animal experts with the nationwide Species Survival Plan had to give approval for the Lincoln Park Zoo to breed them.

"We really lucked out that not only we were recommended to breed but the fact that they both ended up pregnant at the same time, and now we have these two youngsters," Dewar said.

This is the second pair of newborns birthed at the Lincoln Park Zoo in recent months, following two Western Lowland Gorilla newborns who arrived last fall.

Visitors can see herd of six takins in the zoo's Antelope and Zebra Area. But already, the youngsters are starting to show their personalities.

"We definitely know the firstborn is much more active and gregarious than the newer born," who likes to hide in mom's legs, at least for now, Dewar said. "The younger one needs a few days to catch up, and get his legs and learn to use them."