

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TWO NEW MOMS JUST IN TIME FOR MOTHER'S DAY

FRESNO, Ca. – With its long nose, small beady eyes, and tiny ears, the baby's face might be considered one only a mother could love, but the new baby born April 26 at Fresno Chaffee Zoo has the perfect features for a giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*). The infant, whose sex is still unknown, was born after a gestation period of about 190 days. This is the second offspring for four-year old "Amber" and 23-year old "Hosenose."

Newborn anteaters climb onto the mother's back where it spends much of its time until it is nearly half her size. Born with the same striking markings as the adult, an infant anteater is almost undetectable in this position.

Anteaters are one of only two mammals without any teeth. The mouth is very small, barely big enough to pass a pencil, but the tongue can reach two feet in length. The tongue is covered with sticky saliva, allowing it to trap insects such as ants and termites, and it can be extended and withdrawn up to 150 times per minute. The giant anteater can eat as many as 30,000 insects a day in the wild and is fed a gruel of meat, fruit cocktail, yogurt and crickets at the Zoo.

Giant anteaters can be found in large parts of southern Central America and the northern and central parts of South America. Populations are densest in the tropical forests, grasslands, and highlands where ants are most abundant. Giant anteaters grow to 6 to 8 feet in length and weigh about 70 pounds.

More than a dozen tiny emperor scorpions (*Pandinus imperator*) were also born at the Zoo on April 26. This is the first successful breeding of this species at Fresno Chaffee Zoo.

The baby scorpions, called scorplings, are born very vulnerable and unable to fend for themselves. The scorplings are white at birth due to their soft exoskeleton which becomes hard and dark as they molt and grow. The young scorpions ride on the mother's back and she cares for her babies in a number of ways such as fiercely defending them and killing prey for them. The scorplings will begin to venture off their mothers back, continuing to return when they feel threatened, until eventually becoming independent when a few months of age.

The emperor scorpion is native to the rain forests of West Africa and is one of the largest species of scorpion in the world with adults measuring 10-12" from claw to tip of stinger. Commonly thought to be insects, scorpions are actually in the same family as spiders, ticks and mites. Emperor scorpions, like other scorpions, are timid and reclusive but will use their powerful pinchers and mildly venomous stinger in self defense. Their pinchers are also used to catch their diet of ground dwelling insects and other invertebrates as well as the occasional small vertebrate such as mice or lizards.

Giant anteaters and emperor scorpions are both listed as Appendix II by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) meaning they are a species not necessarily threatened to extinction but should be controlled in trade to avoid overuse. Habitat destruction is a threat to both species and emperor scorpions are captured for food and ritual use by some native tribes, for sale into the pet trade, and for use in homeopathic remedies.