



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** Aug. 2, 2016

### **3-MONTH-OLD MUSKOX CALF MAKES PUBLIC DEBUT AT POINT DEFIANCE ZOO & AQUARIUM**

*Hudson arrived from Alaska in late July, is still being bottle fed, and will be on exhibit daily*

TACOMA, Wash – At about 140 pounds, he looks like a large ball of fluffy gray and white fur with short, stubby legs and huge brown eyes.

But when fully grown, Hudson could weigh up to 800 pounds and will be distinguished by the long, shaggy outer hair layer and short horns characteristic of all muskoxen.

Hudson, who turned 3 months old on Aug. 1, arrived at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium in late July from the Large Animal Research Station at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, where he was born.

The little calf with so much personality wowed the air cargo crew who helped ship him south from Alaska. He made his public debut in a portion of the zoo's muskoxen yard and delighted the public on Tuesday, Aug. 2.

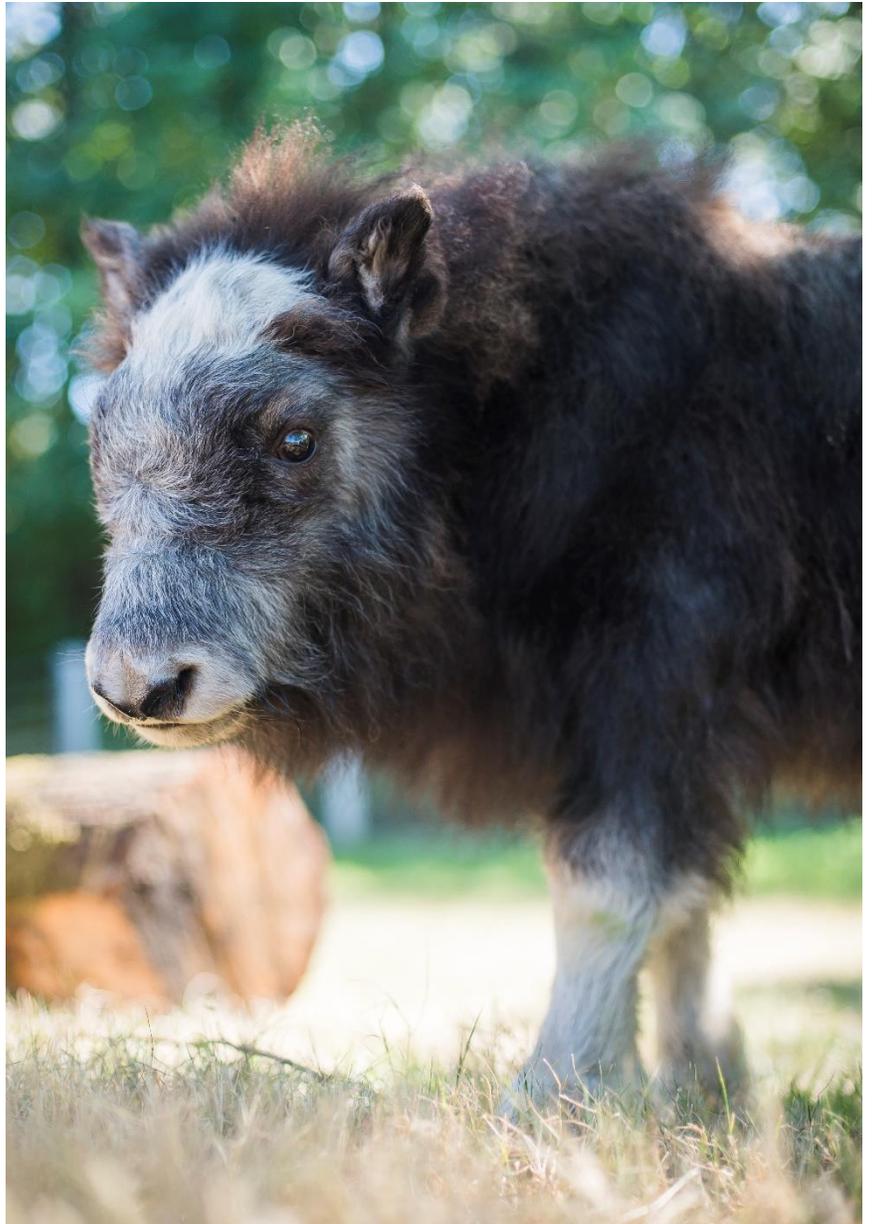
Members of the public will be able view him there during the zoo hours from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

"We are thrilled for Hudson to make his new home at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium," said Shannon Smith, the senior staff biologist who oversees the team that cares for muskoxen at the zoo.

"These are ancient animals with a rich history, and they help teach our visitors about ways in which animals adapt to survive in some of the world's harshest climates," she added.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is one of only two accredited zoos in the continental United States where visitors can see muskoxen.

Hudson, who was rejected by his mother and has been bottle fed since shortly after his birth, "was absolutely everyone's favorite" at the Large Animal Research Station, Smith said. "He loves to be around people, and he is very relaxed. "He also loves to have his chest scratched."



**Hudson is a 3-month-old muskox calf at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.**



n receives two bottles of specially formulated milk each day, in addition to timothy hay and grain pellets that are made to meet a growing muskox's nutritional needs. He also is fond of the clover, dandelions and other vegetation in his new exhibit space. Though visitors might see an afternoon bottle feeding, it will be quick. He finishes one off in just a couple of minutes.

Muskoxen long have been viewed as hearty land dwellers whose prehistoric roots go back across the centuries to the last Ice Age. But the animals' ability to deal with significant climate change is poor, and their species has died off in Europe and Asia, according to the Large Animal Research Station's website.

They are native to Arctic prairies and tundra and are commonly found in Greenland, northern Canada and Alaska. These relics of the Ice Age are part of the *bovidae* biological family, which includes bison, buffalo, antelope, gazelles, sheep, goats and domestic cattle.

Climate change is rapidly and significantly affecting the Arctic.

Although scientists know that climate change significantly affects the sea ice platforms from which polar bears hunt for the seals that are their main source of food, it is not fully known how muskoxen are being affected.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium Senior Staff Biologist Shannon Smith gives 3-month-old muskox calf Hudson a bottle of specially formulated milk.



**Even though only 3 months old, Hudson the muskox calf already is showing his natural instincts for headbutting. Male muskoxen battle by butting heads to exert dominance over the herd.**

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium zookeepers chose the name Hudson for the calf to honor the legacy of muskoxen in the Hudson Bay area of Canada. Though hunted nearly to extinction in that region during the late 1800s and early 1900s for their pelts and their meat, conservation programs eventually helped the species recover and grow in numbers in that area.

He is the first of three new muskoxen who are to make their homes at the zoo this summer and fall. Plans call for him to be joined in coming weeks by a 2-year-old female and a 4-year-old male.

Muskoxen have been part of Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium's Pacific Rim animal family for 35 years. In addition to Hudson, the zoo has one adult muskox, 13-year-old Mya. She came to the zoo as a calf in September 2003.

If Hudson looks like a woolly bundle of fur, that's because he is. His outer coat will soon become long and shaggy. But during the winter months, a thick layer of qiviut (pronounced kiv-ee-ute) will be snug against his body. It's an underwool that helps keep these natives of Arctic regions warm during harsh winters. It is softer than cashmere and prized by knitters for the construction of soft, warm garments and throws.

More information about muskoxen, their unusual fur and other facts is available at the Large Animal Research Facility website at [www.lars.uaf.edu](http://www.lars.uaf.edu) or [www.pdza.org/muskox](http://www.pdza.org/muskox) or [www.pdza.org/muskox-facts](http://www.pdza.org/muskox-facts).



Hudson already is showing the behaviors typical of a male muskox. A video taken by the research facility staff shows the young calf butting his head against a pile of logs.

A bull muskox has a special reinforcement of bone on his head where he is likely to ram other muskoxen during battles for dominance over the herd. Muskoxen are called harem breeders: the bulls will try to gather a group of cows, guard them from other males and breed all of the females in the group.

And he is growing quickly – around two pounds each week. Within a few weeks, he will be weaned of his bottles and be eating only timothy hay and the specially formulated herbivore chow.

Males can grow up to around 800 pounds and stand about 5 feet high at the shoulders. Fully grown females can weigh between 500 and 600 pounds and stand about 4 feet high.

The zoo's Arctic Tundra area is home to reindeer, polar bears, and Arctic foxes.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is proud to be an [Arctic Ambassador Center](#), providing leadership for carbon emission reduction in the community, as well as support for Polar Bears International to help conserve wild polar bears and Arctic ecosystems. Members of the public can join the zoo in these efforts by finding ways to decrease their daily energy usage. Go to [www.pdza.org/climate-change](http://www.pdza.org/climate-change) for more information.

Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium is open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

A keeper gives Hudson a handful of dandelions to taste in his new exhibit space at Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium.

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*Point Defiance Zoo & Aquarium, the Northwest's only combined zoo and aquarium, practices and promotes responsible stewardship of the world's resources through education, conservation, research and recreational opportunities. The zoo, a division of Metro Parks Tacoma, is accredited by the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums (AMMPA).*

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