

# DC panda that birthed live cub has stillborn one too

August 25 2013, by Jessica Gresko

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In this image from video provided by the Smithsonian National Zoo, Mei Xiang gives birth to a cub two hours after her water broke Friday, Aug. 23, 2013, at the National Zoo in Washington. The zoo has been on round-the-clock panda watch since Aug. 7, when Mei Xiang began showing behavioral changes consistent with a pregnancy or pseudopregnancy. (AP Photo/Smithsonian National Zoo)

An official says a panda that gave birth to a cub at Washington's National Zoo has also given birth to a stillborn cub.

Zoo spokeswoman Pamela Baker-Masson says Mei Xiang (may-SHONG) gave birth to the motionless cub Saturday night and groomed it

for 17 minutes before letting it fall to the floor. She says the cub wasn't fully formed and was never alive.

Mei gave birth to a live cub on Friday that [zoo](#) workers are cautiously optimistic is healthy.

Baker-Masson says Mei still hasn't allowed [staffers](#) to get their first close look at her live cub but they could hear the newborn squealing and it appears to be doing well.

A necropsy is being performed on the stillborn cub.

*THIS IS A BREAKING NEWS UPDATE. Check back soon for further information. An earlier story is below.*

Caretakers at Washington's National Zoo hope to get the first close look at a newborn panda cub during a weekend exam.

During the checkup, officials will try to listen to the cub's heart and lungs, record its weight and collect a DNA sample. The minutes-long health assessment was initially planned for Saturday, but mom Mei Xiang (may-SHONG) didn't give keepers an opportunity to take her cub, which was born Friday evening and is about the size of a stick of butter.

Brandie Smith, the zoo's curator of [mammals](#), says she and others are "cautiously optimistic" about this cub's health. She compared the planned exam to a [race car](#) pit stop, a fast and highly choreographed checkup before reuniting mom and cub.

The cub is the 15-year-old panda's third. The cub she gave birth to last year died after just six days. That cub's lungs hadn't fully developed and likely weren't sending enough oxygen to its liver. Mei Xiang's first cub, a male named Tai Shan, was born in 2005.



In this Oct. 11, 2012, file photo Mei Xiang, a giant female panda, rests at the National Zoo in Washington. Mei Xiang gave birth to a cub at the Smithsonian's National Zoo 5:32 p.m. EDT on Friday, Aug. 23, 2013. Zoo keepers heard the cub vocalize and glimpsed the cub for the first time briefly immediately after the birth. Mei Xiang picked the cub up immediately and began cradling and caring for it.(AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin, File)

An early exam at the zoo is a change from last year, and staff members have made several other changes in preparation for another cub. Mei Xiang's den has been altered to allow keepers to get closer to her, and the zoo also invited a panda expert from China who specializes in newborns to help out. Two of the zoo's panda keepers have also recently spent time in China learning more about examining newborns.

Zookeepers made two attempts at examining the cub Saturday, but Mei Xiang was cradling the cub and officials were unable to take it for a

closer examination, zoo spokeswoman Pamela Baker-Masson said. They planned to try again Sunday.

Information collected during the exam will serve as a baseline for future exams. And the DNA sample, either from a swab of the cub's mouth or feces, will be used to determine the cub's father. Mei Xiang was artificially inseminated both with sperm from the zoo's male panda, Tian Tian (tee-YEN tee-YEN), and sperm from a panda at the San Diego Zoo, Gao Gao.

Visitors to the zoo Saturday said they were excited about another [panda cub](#). Melissa Schmechel, of Alexandria, Va., said she spent about 30 minutes Friday watching the zoo's online panda camera after it was announced on Facebook and Twitter that Mei Xiang had gone into labor. She said she and her family had made plans to visit the zoo last year after the birth of Mei Xiang's second [cub](#) and were sad when it died.

"Hopefully this will have a better outcome," she said as her 11-year-old daughter, Laura, hugged a newly purchased stuffed panda.

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