Knut Health Scare Over, He Was Only Teething

Knut fans can relax. Berlin Zoo has given the world-famous bear cub a clean bill of health and said he only had teething trouble on Sunday and Monday when he worried visitors by lying on the ground with his paws over his eyes. After taking antibiotics, he's playing again, but his cheek's a bit swollen.

Berlin Zoo reassured alarmed Knut fans on Tuesday that the polar bear cub celebrity is back on his paws after he had been feeling so poorly that worried vets had cut short Monday's public viewing and taken him back to his cage.

"It was only toothache," said a spokeswoman for the zoo. "He's growing a back tooth and it hurt him like it hurts most small children." Knut would be back on show on Tuesday, she said. "He's playing again but his cheek is swollen."

The cub usually enthralls his thousands of visitors by scampering around his enclosure, playing with his football and cuddly toy rabbit and trying to bite his keeper. But on Monday he had been feeling so unwell that he just lay on the ground holding his big paws over his eyes and fell asleep. He didn't even want to take a dip in the water around his enclosure, despite the warm spring weather.

After half an hour his two keepers decided to break off the show and took him back to his cage where two vets examined him and concluded that he had a fever. They couldn't be entirely sure about his temperature though because he refused to let them put a thermometer up his bottom.

At first the vets thought he may have caught a cold or contracted food poisoning from faeces that the zoo's brown bears had left around his enclosure. They ruled out that he had become overheated in the sunshine, pointing out that his fur protects him from heat as well as cold. In the end the vets decided that it was only teething trouble and gave him antibiotics, the spokeswoman said.

Last month one of the zoo's two Panda bears, 22-year-old lady Panda Yan Yan, died suddenly of heart failure after contracting an infection linked to acute constipation.

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