



Kids in the summer reading program, Paws, Claws and Tales, at the Goodland Public Library in grades three and up were treated to a visit by Jennifer Lemmond (left) from the Denver Zoo. Christian Michaud (left) touches a milk snake and tells the rest of the group what it feels like. Lemmond took Tiny, a box turtle, around to let kids including Evin Bergquist (above left), Margaux Thompson and Alexis Bergquist gently touch her.

Photos by Pat Schiefen/The Goodland Star-News



# Zoo reptiles visit summer reading program

By Pat Schiefen

*The Goodland Star-News*

A milk snake, blue-tongued skink, box turtle and an alligator from the Denver Zoo visited kids third grade and up in the Goodland Public Library's summer reading program.

Jennifer Lemmond brought the animals and displays for tables, plus magnifying glasses so the children could look at snake skins and skulls from various reptiles she put out.

Lemmond taught facts about reptiles, telling the students they are cold blooded, have holes for ears, use forked tongues to smell with, have scales and backbones and

some are venomous. For something to be poisonous, she noted, it has to be eaten, while a creature's bite may inject venom.

Reptiles are divided into four groups, she said, chelonians such as turtles and tortoises, snakes, lizards and crocodilians, including crocodiles and alligators.

Lemmond introduced Tiny, a box turtle, explaining that the shells of turtles and tortoises are part of their backbones. The largest turtle, she said, is the leather-backed sea turtle, which eats jellyfish.

Turtles live in water and tortoises live on land, she told the class. Tortoises usually eat plants, have more

dome-shaped shells and elephant-like feet. She let the kids feel Tiny's shell near her tail. Everyone used waterless hand cleaner after touching the animals to protect the animals as well as the people.

She told the kids when she showed them the animals that they needed to be quiet and not move around.

The next animal that was talked about was the snake. Snakes are all carnivores and have no legs, she said. They all can dislocate their jaws to swallow large prey, shed their skins, some are venomous and all are deaf.

Lemmond picked a boy to touch

the milk snake, which when frightened secretes a white, smelly substance. A milk snake is a constrictor which squeezes its prey tighter at each breath, she said.

"It feels slimy," said Christian Michaud.

She told him that snakes were not really slimy, just smooth and a little slick. The longest snake, she said, is the reticulated python, which can grow to 33 feet and 130 pounds. The largest snake is the Anaconda at 30 feet long and 400-500 pounds.

Pete, the blue tongued skink, was next on stage. Lemmond said the lizard, from Australia, was about 20 years old. Everyone who wanted to

could touch his tail.

Crocodile monitor lizards, at 18 feet, are the longest lizards, she said, but the Komoto dragon is the biggest and heaviest. Lizards can flatten their tongues when they stick them out, she said, and their blue tongues might convince something not to eat them. Some lizards can lose a limb or tail if necessary to get away from a predator and will grow the limb or tail back.

Whipper, a 2-year-old alligator, was the last animal Lemmond showed. She said he had a tendency to throw temper tantrums and she then has to calm him down. Alligators have narrow snouts, show their

top teeth when their mouths are closed and are native to the U.S. and China, she said. Crocodiles live in the rest of the world. They have wider snouts and both top and bottom teeth show when their mouths are closed.

Alligator and crocodile mothers take care of their babies. She let Victoria Steggall touch Whipper and tell the others what he felt like.

Lemmond allowed the kids to look at the display tables and ask questions after that.

"Wow, look at the skulls," said one of the kids.

# Options tough in epidemic

By Tom Betz

*The Goodland Star-News*

A statewide or national medical emergency will require quick thinking, and the county commissioners are at the top of the list in Kansas' decision-making chain.

Dorendo Harrel of the county health department told the Sherman County commissioners at their meeting on Friday the ultimate decisions on health matters are in their hands.

"We are looking at your roles in a pandemic flu emergency," Harrel said, "but it could be any type of medical emergency or bioterrorism incident."

"The buck stops here. You have to make the ultimate decisions about steps to be taken in Sherman County to handle the emergency."

Harrel handed the commissioners state laws that spell out the commissioners' duties in handling such emergencies.

She said Dr. David Younger is the county health officer and he would be the one making recommendations.

Harrel said that if there were a medical or bioterrorism incident, the first step would be to isolate the

infected and possibly quarantine anyone who has been in contact with a sick person.

She said it could mean the commissioners might have to order people to stay home and cancel any public gatherings.

"What happens to businesses if they can't allow their employees to come to work?" Harrel said.

"What if they are sick or possibly would be exposed to a pandemic flu outbreak?"

She said there would be an informal exercise from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 19, to get the key people looking at the options in an emergency.

"This is for any kind of major emergency," Harrel said, "not just the bird flu. It will help us get as prepared as possible for any new biological emergency."

"If it is a nationwide emergency, it will impact trucking and how things are moved across the country."

"We can talk about it forever," Commissioner Chuck Thomas said. "We have to be honest that we are not going to help everyone. There will be panic. It is human nature."

"What about the health care

workers?" Harrel said. "They will face the same questions."

"There is always going to be a scenario we have not thought of, but we can at least go through a list of things that may happen and see what the alternatives are."

Harrel said she did an after-action report on the inoculation experiment the health department held at the Elks lodge on April 11.

"We have some issues," she said. "It gave us an idea of what works and what has to be changed. The lighting is not good in parts of the Elks building, but really there were just minor problems."

She asked the commissioners to review the rules and regulations and sign them so she can send it in to the state. She said Dr. Younger had reviewed it and signed them.

"The hospital didn't show up for our meeting again," Harrel said. "I don't know what their plans are."

Melissa Wachendorfer of Selden, western regional coordinator for bioterrorism, accompanied Harrel. Wachendorfer said she has been around for four years and the region covers nine counties.

## corrections

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Saturday, July 8, 2006

7 a.m. to 11 a.m. Mountain time

HHW Facility

1820 Cherry Street

Goodland, Kansas

For more information please contact Kenny Griffith at 821-1024.

No early drop off or no drop offs without personnel present.

There will be no **Used Oil** collected at this time.

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