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Moo Deng

Moo Deng (born 10 July 2024) is a pygmy hippopotamus living in Khao Kheow Open Zoo in Si Racha, Chonburi, Thailand.^{[1][2]} She became a popular Internet meme at two months of age after images of her went viral online in September 2024.

Background

Moo Deng was born on 10 July 2024 to parents Tony and Jonah. She has two full siblings (Nadet and Moo Tun) and four half-siblings (Ko, Kanya, Phalo, and Moo Wan).^[3] The name *Moo Deng* (Thai: หมูเต้ง, RTGS: mu deng, pronounced [mǔː dɛ̌ŋ]) was chosen through a public poll, with over 20,000 people voting for it. It translates to 'bouncy pork' or 'bouncy pig' in English.^{[4][5][6][7]}

Online popularity

Khao Kheow Open Zoo posted images of its pygmy hippopotamuses on its official Facebook page, and Moo Deng quickly became a favorite among fans.^[8] Moo Deng is noted to be more playful and energetic than other hippopotamuses. In response to her popularity, the zoo began selling clothing and other merchandise featuring designs based on Moo Deng.^{[4][9][10]} Moo Deng has become the subject of many pieces of fan art.^[11]

Due to Moo Deng's viral online popularity, the number of daily visitors to the zoo doubled in early September 2024.^{[12][13]} Around this time, some visitors have harassed the baby by

Moo Deng

หมูเต้ง



Moo Deng in 2024

Species	<u>Pygmy hippopotamus</u> (<i>Choeropsis liberiensis</i>)
Sex	Female
Born	10 July 2024
Residence	<u>Khao Kheow Open Zoo</u> , Si Racha, Chonburi, Thailand
Parent(s)	Jonah (mother) and Tony (father)
Named after	Thai for 'bouncy pork' or 'bouncy pig'



Thai-language news coverage of Moo Deng in September 2024

splashing her with water^{[10][14]} or throwing objects at her to wake her up. As a result, the Khao Kheow Open Zoo installed security cameras around her enclosure. The zoo director has threatened legal action against visitors who harassed her.^{[15][16]}^[14] The misbehavior by some visitors has been widely condemned online.^{[17][18]} The zoo also implemented a five-minute time limit for visitors in order to accommodate the high volume.^[19]

In September 2024, zoo director Narongwit Chodchoi announced that the zoo had begun the process of copyrighting and trademarking "Moo Deng the hippo" to raise funds for the zoo.^{[6][20]} The zoo also plans to launch a continuous livestream to allow fans to watch Moo Deng live over the Internet.^[21]

On September 28, Moo Deng was the subject of a *Saturday Night Live* sketch.^[22] She was parodied by Bowen Yang on *Weekend Update*, and the character was used to satirize American pop-artist Chappell Roan's commentary on fame and political endorsements.^[23]

Welfare concerns

Animal welfare groups have expressed concern for Moo Deng. A spokesperson for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals said, "She faces a lifetime of confinement," while World Animal Protection said, "Sharing Moo Deng content might seem innocuous, but it promotes cruelty to animals."^[24] The zoo's director, Narongwit Chodchoi, rejected the allegations and maintained that the facility ensures the welfare and quality of life for more than 2,000 animals.^[24] The Thai Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals said that Moo Deng was well taken care of and that PETA was relying on "outdated" information.^[24]

See also

- Hua Hua, a baby panda that gained online popularity in 2024
- Knut, a baby polar bear that gained online popularity
- Pesto, a baby penguin that gained online popularity in September 2024
- Fiona, another hippo that gained online popularity

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A cut-out depicting Moo Deng at Book Expo Thailand 2024 in October

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