

Perry Summary

Information redacted who was helping me with a sloth case and said you were her go-to expert for sloths! She also shared your article in the AAZK journal about Linne's sloths, which was SO helpful and well-written! I hope I can get your opinion on my sloth, Perry, and her baby Sydney. **Information redacted** me that she gave you a heads-up that I would be contacting you, but I'm not sure how much detail she went into. I'll write a summary here, and if you would like me to go into more detail, I can definitely do that. I just don't want this to be overwhelming, because it's already going to be long with just the summary! Summary: Perry is a 7-ish year old female Linne's sloth who lives at **Information redacted**, which is a local zoo/aquarium, which I am the veterinarian for. She was purchased last year from a breeder in Florida, called World Exotics. In December 2019, she had a surprise baby. The vet that worked with **Information redacted** before me had assumed that her recent lack of appetite and growing belly was due to gas and didn't really show a lot of concern or interest in diagnostics (which is the reason they found a new vet!). Perry had no abnormalities clinically when I started working there in January 2020. She was pretty normal until April 26th. She was found disoriented, weak, unable to use her hands/limbs, flailing around, falling out of her basket. That week her ataxia progressed to the point of full paralysis. I placed a feeding tube, which stayed in for almost 2 months. Over that time, I treated her for anything I could think of or that I had recommended to me from other AAZV veterinarians. This included antibiotics, antifungals, anti-inflammatories, pain meds, anti-seizure meds, antiparasitics, vitamin supplementation, calcium, fluids, and critical care diet. We did blood work, rads, heavy metal testing, abdominal ultrasound - did not find anything too significant. Since that first week of May, Perry and Sydney have been staying at my apartment with me so that we can provide 24/7 monitoring, as well as treatments as needed (which was A LOT at the beginning), physical therapy, and so that we could keep Sydney away from Perry to allow her to rest. She slowly improved, and it was almost like she had to relearn how to use all of her muscles. She started to get her normal personality back slowly, as well. With the help of frequent physical therapy, stretches, swim therapy, and as much exercise as possible, Perry finally started climbing again 2 weeks ago. She has been improving in coordination and control every day. She's still not using her hands to grab food, but I'm trying to work on that. She has improved SO much over the course of the last 6-7 months. Before she got sick, she was pretty indifferent to humans, and wouldn't really allow a lot of contact other than taking food. Now, she absolutely loves humans, and will actively crawl/climb to people and climb up on to them to be held. She'll sit with her arms around a person's shoulders like a baby, and she'll stay like that as long as they'll let her. She really seems very happy and comfortable. One of my biggest concerns with not knowing the cause of her problems is that I don't know if Sydney is going to have the same problem as he ages. A few months into her treatment, I was told that **Information redacted** had an adult male pass away with similar signs, also from World Exotics and actually related to Perry. I was also told at that time that **Information redacted** had one CURRENTLY with the same signs, and then died. He was an adult male that had been trembling for a month before crashing, then ended up dying despite some supportive care. It was pretty frustrating to find out that this had been going on in other sloths from the same family line, since I was working so hard to try to find ANYTHING that could cause these clinical signs. A few weeks ago, I had come to the conclusion that it must have been some kind of metabolic

problem associated with poor genetic health, like PKU in humans (which my brother has, coincidentally). I sent out an email to AAZV to ask about Inborn Errors of Metabolism in sloths, and **Information redacted** responded. She said that it may have been a problem associated with poor neonatal care and improper diet at the breeder. She said that sloth breeders are usually pretty shady in general, and often separate babies from their mothers way too young, predisposing them to all kinds of health problems as they age. It's pretty clear that World Exotics is not the highest quality breeder based on the fact that he sold a pregnant female without realizing she was pregnant. Really shows how well he monitors his sloths. I sent him an email asking for details on Perry's breeding history, but haven't heard back, and honestly I don't really expect to hear anything from him. Unfortunately, **Information redacted** was previously managed by a very unorganized general manager who did not keep records of hardly anything, so they have no records on Perry before she arrived at their facility. We don't even know how old she is. 11/29/2020 Gmail - Sloth case question ... 2/5 From my perspective, **Information redacted** theory makes a lot of sense and really fits with the clinical picture of Perry's case, as well as the other two males that died. At this point **information redacted** is very happy with the fact that Perry is doing so well, and so am I. But I'm still really anxious about the lack of definitive diagnosis. I am so worried that we're going to move her back into her enclosure full time and she's going to relapse, or Sydney is going to start having issues. Sydney has never shown any health problems, and is a fat, healthy, happy little boy. The male sloth that died in Las Vegas was replaced by a female, also from World Exotics, so I'm also worried about her future health. The reason I'm reaching out to you is to get your opinion on this case and see if you have ever experienced something like this before. I have not found anyone that has had a case like Perry's, and I've contacted anyone I can in the zoo vet world. Perry's diet currently is made up of Mazuri leaf-eater biscuits, veggies (primarily zucchini, squash, and eggplant), and fruit (few grapes, really loves apples). I was feeding a little bit of canned primate food for a little bit, but **information redacted** recommended that I remove that from the diet. While at **Information redacted** before she crashed, she was also getting greens (kale and other dark leafy greens), spirulina powder, chia seeds, and a few other veggies. She has apparently always been a picky eater, but she eats really well now. My theory is that protein in the diet was part of her problem, stemming from poor neonatal health and subsequent (suspected) metabolic problems. Do you think that this is possible, or have you seen/heard of any cases similar to this in sloths? Have you seen any other genetic issues in Linne's, or any sloths, that may have been the result of poor breeding quality? I've attached the write-up from the vet who worked with the Las Vegas sloth, as well as his gross necropsy report and histopath report. I can also send you a more detailed write-up of Perry's case if that would help. I have zero information on the New Jersey male sloth that died, other than it was progressive ataxia and then he died. I've reached out to both vets to try to get more details, and I'm a little frustrated that I wasn't able to work with them real time, since we may have been able to keep those sloths alive as well. But anyway, for now I just hope to make a plan that will keep the rest of the sloths healthy. I really appreciate any information/recommendations you can give me about this case, or really any sloth management recommendations in general. I know you're very busy, so please do not feel that you need to spend too much time on this, but if you're able to answer any of these questions, I'd really appreciate it! Questions: 1. Do you think I should change anything about the current diet? 2. Do you have recommendations on how to encourage her to use her hands to eat? 3. Sydney

is still nursing once in a while. There were a few months, while Perry was in really bad shape, that he was not nursing at all. I assume this was because she was not healthy enough to produce milk. Should I be concerned that he's still nursing, or try to discourage that? He's very bull-headed, so I don't know how successful that would be. 4. I know that you and **information redacted** are responsibly breeding Linne's sloths, but I assume you send most of those to other larger zoos to continue breeding programs, rather than selling to little zoos like **information redacted**. But do you have a recommendation on a legitimate, quality source of sloths (if that exists in the zoo animal breeding world)? I hate the idea of supporting World Exotics any further, but I don't have a lot of say in where the home office purchases their animals. Do you think it's worth trying to have a welfare check, or something similar, for World Exotics? I don't know who to report to, but I would definitely be willing to do absolutely anything needed. He's obviously going to keep producing more sloths and selling them, despite the fact that they're dying with these problems. I don't know what other facilities might have purchased sloths with these problems, and I really want to prevent that if at all possible. 5. Do you recommend any supplements for Perry and Sydney? I keep seeing information about hyper- and hypovitaminosis of various vitamins, so I'm concerned about causing more problems! Please let me know if you need any more information! There was a series written about Perry on SeaQuest's blog. I wrote up a full, detailed account of her case, and then they added a little bit of drama and emotion, instead of just details, so it's a little bit sappy. But if you're interested in reading it, here's a link: **information redacted**- it really is an amazing case to read about. Perry has been the toughest patient I have ever worked with, and I legitimately cannot believe how tolerant and determined she has been through this whole thing. She went through so much and is so happy again. I've always been a fan of sloths, and worked with some in Ecuador a while back, but I had no idea what amazing animals they are. They've become my favorite animal for sure, and I really want to continue working with sloths in any capacity I can. If you have any articles, books, journals, or ANYTHING you recommend on sloth care/management/rehab, I would really appreciate it! I would also love to pay any kind of consult fee, or donate to your program if you don't have a consult fee. Please let me know! Thank you for your time! I hope you had a wonderful (and safe) Thanksgiving. I really look forward to hearing from you! -- S **information redacted information redacted**

For the questions: 1. Do you think I should change anything about the current diet? the current diet sounds good, I'd keep the diet pretty basic right now. Squash, leaf-eater, zucchini, eggplant, sweet potato and the occasional fruits like grape/apple/mango 2. Do you have recommendations on how to encourage her to use her hands to eat? What happens if you were to leave food in arms reach but not close enough for her head to get it without moving? I wonder if this is a deficit or if she has been behaviorally conditioned from needing care? If you don't mind, sending a video would help me provide an opinion. 3. Sydney is still nursing once in a while. There were a few months, while Perry was in really bad shape, that he was not nursing at all. I assume this was because she was not healthy enough to produce milk. Should I be concerned that he's still nursing, or try to discourage that? He's very bull-headed, so I don't know how successful that would be. 11/29/2020 **information redacted**...