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## **Press release**

### **Tiny bears with a big appetite**

#### **Zoo Berlin's panda cubs are developing well**

The panda twins have spent their first few days in the world cuddling, drinking and sleeping. Now – thanks to their mum's extremely nutritious milk – the growth spurt is beginning.

The cubs lost a little weight in the first two days after birth, but are now regaining the grams. The larger, first-born cub has a particularly insatiable appetite, which mother Meng Meng obliges by putting it on all four teats to feed. As a result, the little panda has already reached its original birth weight. The first form of milk produced by mammals is called colostrum and contains important enzymes, vitamins and minerals as well as antibodies to protect the young from disease. In addition to feeding at its mum's teats, the smaller of the twins is also regularly fed in the incubator with milk pumped from Meng Meng. The Chinese animal keeper skilfully offers the baby panda a small drinking bottle, at which point the cub rolls up its tongue and opens its toothless little muzzle. The tiny bear, whose weight had temporarily fallen to 109 grams, drinks some four to six millilitres of milk roughly every two hours. Its weight is now up to 130 grams. "I would like to thank our colleagues at Charité for providing the incubators so that we can lend Meng Meng a helping hand in the early days and give our twins the best start in life," says Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. These incubators usually contain tiny newborn humans who have had a difficult start in life and need to gain strength.

The twin cubs do not yet bear much resemblance to adult pandas, but this will soon start to change. "In about two weeks, the first black patches will start to appear on their skin, and then the little ones will look a bit more like pandas," reports Knieriem.

#### **Background:**

Zoo Berlin has been home to Germany's only giant pandas since summer 2017. On 31 August 2019, female panda Meng Meng gave birth to two cubs weighing 186 and 136 grams. Father Jiao Qing is not involved in the rearing of cubs – as is normal for giant pandas. Current estimates suggest that there are only 1,864 adult giant pandas living in their



natural habitat worldwide. Giant pandas are therefore classified as “Vulnerable” on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Zoo Berlin pays an annual loan fee for the honour of keeping the pandas, and 100 percent of that sum is channelled into conservation work such as the breeding, protection and reintroduction into the wild of the beloved bamboo-eating bears. Panda pair Meng Meng and Jiao Qing are sponsored by cooperative banking association Berliner Volksbank.

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