

POLITICO

‘Panda cam’ turned off during government shutdown

By Mackenzie Weinger

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The National Zoo’s popular panda cam and its other animal web cams went dark on Tuesday thanks to the government shutdown.

“None of our live animal cams will broadcast,” the zoo said in a statement on its website. “The cams require federal resources, primarily staff, to run and broadcast. They’ve been deemed non-essential during the shutdown.”

The zoo is now also closed to the public, as are the rest of the Smithsonian museums. But the government shutdown will not impact the care of the animals, the zoo noted.

“All the animals will continue to be fed and cared for,” the statement said. “A shutdown will not affect our commitment to the safety of our staff and standard of excellence in animal care.”

The zoo is home to three endangered Giant Pandas — Tian Tian, Mei Xiang and Mei Xiang’s new panda cub, born on Aug 23.

For many, the news of the end of panda watch has brought out tense emotions, as well as some mockery.

Gene Healy, a Washington Examiner columnist and a vice president at the Cato Institute, tweeted “Pandacam’s shut down, but domestic spying’s still an ‘essential service,’” linking to his column this week. And CNN national desk assignment editor Stephanie Gallman called the news “UNACCEPTABLE: The @NationalZoo Panda Cam has gone down thanks to the government #shutdown. #outrage #gettoworkCongress.”

Salon’s Mary Elizabeth Williams linked to an article about the panda cam shutdown, tweeting “OH MY GOD THIS IS WORSE THAN WE EVER DREAMED,” while The Washington Post’s Karen Tumulty predicted “my money is on the red panda to making another jailbreak during the #shutdown.” National Review editor-at-large Jonah Goldberg, meanwhile, tweeted

“National Zoo: The fact that panda is on lunch menu at cafeteria totally unrelated to government shutdown.”