

Susan Reinhardt on the pregnant giraffe cam

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Susan Reinhardt

Time to get a bit smug, then take my very own self down a peg or two, as Mama always said when folks got too big for their bloomers.

Truth is, I used to guffaw and harrumph when people would sign into Facebook and post the mundane happenings in their lives, such as:

“I just ate supper. Yummy.”

“Calling it a night.”

“Got a touch of gas.”

I know I slap some nonsense on FB, but for real? A cryptic message saying, “He knows what he did!!!”

My copping an attitude evaporated quickly when I became totally obsessed with a giraffe at the Greenville, S.C., zoo that just will NOT give birth.

Her name is Autumn, and hundreds of thousands of people all over the world are watching this giraffe from the zoo’s live EarthCam as she prepares to drop a calf for everyone to see.

(Here’s the link just in case you want to waste some time: <http://www.earthcam.com/usa/southcarolina/greenville>)

She’s overdue. And many people who are fixated on watching her round the clock are scared that if they step away from the computer, they’ll miss the big moment.

I had a good friend call on Sunday. “Want to go hiking?”

“Can’t do it,” I said. “What if Autumn has her baby and I miss it after having invested 72 hours sitting on my butt waiting for that calf?”

I went hiking anyway, and upon returning clicked onto the [EarthCam link](#) only to see this beautiful creature flick her tail and drink loads of water.

Her predicted due date was Oct. 16-20.

Just a few hours ago, WYFF in Greenville posted an update: “Autumn the giraffe’s projected due date has passed, so she is expected to give birth to a calf any time now,” zoo officials said.

People from as far away as Australia and Japan are watching the livestream, hoping to see the birth as it occurs live.

“Many fans are actually losing sleep so they won’t miss the birth,” the station reported.

Staff members padded her barn space with mulch because giraffes actually birth their calves while standing upright, meaning the baby’s going to drop a good ways and splat onto the ground.

They typically weigh between 100 and 150 pounds at birth and are 6 feet tall, with hooves and spindly legs emerging first. Calves take their first steps within an hour after being born.

I really got frustrated, seeing this giraffe pace, sleep, eat and drink, even observing her belly bulging as her calf kicked her with those barstool legs.

I thought last night that the big event might happen. She struggled a bit, seemed annoyed as her ears rotated independently, like fish flippers.

But alas, it ’twas just another sleepless night for all of us on Autumn Watch.



The giraffe cam from the Greenville, S.C., zoo is attracting thousands of viewers worldwide. / Special to the Citizen-Times

I say give the poor bloated thing an epidural and Pitocin and induce labor. Perhaps that's considered animal cruelty, but I think the epidural is the greatest invention since the light bulb, and were I going to birth a 150-pound baby, I'd for sure pound my hooves on the barn door and make giraffe sounds.

OK, I had to go Google that, because I'm not sure whether giraffes make noises.

At "Ask Yahoo," a resident expert from Discovery Magazine said that while generally quiet animals, giraffes can make a bleating sound. Another source said, "They are capable of frighteningly loud grunts and roars if they feel threatened."

Some of my friends and relatives are now hooked and glued to the webcam, not wanting to miss the main event.

"Autumn still hasn't had her baby yet? That poor thing must be so miserable," Lynne Stevenson, a South Carolina resident, said. "I watched for a few minutes the other day and nothing had happened then. Wonder if and when they will decide if she needs to have a C-section? If I had been in labor as long as she has been, somebody would have done something long before now."

Most people are becoming increasingly impatient, as if watching paint dry. Others have complained the camera needs adjusting, so we can all see more than a tail swish or those ears twirling.

My good friend Rena finally gave up.

"I couldn't take it," she said. "The suspense was killing me, so I decided that if I want to see something born, I'll drive North Fork and watch a calf drop from a cow."

Here's an update: I just clicked on the site. No sign of Autumn in the paddock or the barn. Time to get a little something done around here.