

The Elephant Managers Association Inc.



Guidelines for Elephant Management and Care

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The following guidelines apply to the husbandry and management of both African (*Loxodonta africana*) and Asian (*Elephas maximus*) elephants. The intelligence, strength, and social needs of these magnificent animals can pose many challenges for managers of elephants in human care. Facilities that manage elephants should therefore understand the substantial human, financial, and ethical commitments involved in appropriately maintaining elephants. These guidelines reflect present day practices, which are based on current scientific data and the cumulative experience of our membership. These guidelines were developed to optimize the animals' physical and psychological health, environmental conditions, and to maximize the educational and scientific value of elephants in human care. These guidelines have been developed to help assist facilities that currently manage or are planning to maintain elephants, as well as regulatory agencies with jurisdiction and oversight over the care and handling of elephants in human care.

These guidelines recognize and reflect a broad range of elephant management styles, however, the Elephant Managers' Association (EMA) believes an elephant management facility that does not operate consistently within these guidelines should be prepared to fully explain and if necessary, defend their practices. Like any living document, the EMA guidelines will be reviewed yearly under the direction of the EMA board of directors. They will be updated as the knowledge base expands to incorporate new techniques and practices.

Personnel/Protocols

1. Each institution should have one person designated as the elephant manager. This person oversees the day-to-day management of the elephants. This individual is responsible for staff training, developing and maintaining the program and communicating with others about the elephant program.
2. The elephant manager should demonstrate knowledge about all emergency protocols and continually improve elephant management techniques as the industry guidelines evolve.
3. All elephant managers are encouraged to develop their skills by visiting other facilities, attending the Elephant Managers Association annual conference, and elephant training schools such as Riddle's Elephant Management School and AZA Principles of Elephant Management Course.

4. Each facility is encouraged to develop and implement a personnel-training protocol to document new employee training and endorsement as a qualified elephant handler.
5. It is recommended that a minimum of two qualified members of the elephant staff should be present during any contact with elephants. A qualified keeper is a person the facility acknowledges as a trained, responsible individual, capable of and specifically experienced in the training and care of elephants,
6. Each facility should have a written elephant management policy. The management policy should include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - Elephant management program's missions and goals
 - Elephant management policies, including guidelines for handling and training the elephant
 - Plan to separate animals from each other, safely manage elephants that are aggressive toward other elephants, safely move elephants from one location to another, and safely manage elephants that are aggressive toward humans
 - Incident reports for all cases in which elephants show aggression toward keepers or to the public
 - Emergency response protocol (Facilities should be able to demonstrate readiness to respond to an emergency situation, such as an elephant escape or keeper injury.)
 - Safety protocols for visitor-elephant interactions and elephant rides
 - Behavioral profile of each individual elephant updated annually
 - Environmental enrichment plan for elephants with evidence of implementation
 - Protocol for routine foot care including daily cleaning and inspection of each elephant's feet and evidence of its implementation
 - Daily exercise program for each individual animal
7. All elephant facilities should undertake a regular elephant facility and program safety assessment. The safety assessments should be conducted semi-annually, identify safety needs and implement any corrective measures. It is recommended that each facility establish a safety assessment team. The team may include elephant care staff, management staff, animal health care staff, and experts in the area of risk management and safety. Each facility should establish the make-up of the team based on its own needs and resources. A written record should be kept for each inspection. The appropriate staff members should review the record and its recommendations acted upon accordingly.

Training

Trained behaviors should allow the elephant care staff access to the animal in order to accomplish all necessary animal care and management procedures (see addendum Behavioral Components of an Elephant Management Program) and permit consistency. The EMA recommended list of commands (see addendum) and their corresponding behaviors are ones that every elephant and elephant keeper should know so that basic husbandry and veterinary practices can be accomplished. Behaviors should be reinforced so that all elephants attain close to 100% compliance upon request of the elephant staff.

Training is an important component of any elephant management program, however, protracted and repeated use of corporal discipline in training is of serious ethical concern and the EMA considers abusive training practices to be unacceptable. Further, elephants that are untrained, unexercised, or unable to complete minimum behavioral requirements may be considered neglected and thereby abused. If properly executed training procedures are ineffective in eliminating aggressive or inappropriate behavior in any given elephant; facilities should consider other alternatives, including transfer of the elephant to a facility with more experienced staff or a different management system.

All elephant training management systems have both advantages and disadvantages. The EMA guidelines for elephant management recognize that a diversity of approaches exists along the continuum of elephant management. The EMA also recognizes that the best elephant management system may be a combination of systems along the continuum. The EMA encourages facilities to continue to evaluate their management practices with the goal of maximizing elephant health, welfare and reproduction and minimizing risk of injury to keeper staff or to the elephants.

The EMA considers the following training tools/techniques to be inappropriate:

- Insertion of any implement into any bodily orifice, unless directed by a veterinarian specifically in connection with training for a medical or reproductive procedure.
- Striking an elephant with anything other than a guide.
- Striking an elephant with any sharp object, including the hook of a guide.
- Striking an elephant on or around any sensitive area, such as the eyes, mouth, ears, or genital region.
- Applying a tool used in training repeatedly and / or with such force that physical harm to an animal results.
- Withholding or reducing an animal's daily-recommended amount of food and/or water, unless directed by a veterinarian.
- Withholding veterinary care for any reason.

Tools

There are many tools that are used in the care and management of elephants. It should be noted that any tool can be misused and every keeper should be taught the proper application of each tool.

1. Management Tools

- Guide: A 'guide', 'ankus' or 'elephant hook' is a traditional tool used for directing elephant's behavior. It is used on specific points on the elephant's body to cue a desired behavior.
- Target: A tool the elephant is conditioned to touch or move towards. Targets have been made out of different materials such as a rubber disk or a pole and a ball on the end. Application of this tool is not limited to a man made tool. An example would be the use of a finger being the target to move the elephants tongue aside for a mouth exam.
- Bridge (whistle/clicker/voice): A cue tells the elephant that they have achieved the desired behavior.
- Ropes, Block & Tackle: These may be used to direct or aid an elephant when training a new behavior. They also can be used to assist or raise a debilitated or partially anesthetized animal to their feet to help ensure their recovery.
- Tub, Balance Beam, Spindle: Tools that have been used for daily exercise programs and educational demonstrations. Some of these have also been used to enable foot care on elephants

2. Restraint

- a. Chaining is an acceptable method of temporary restraint. However, facilities should limit the time elephants spend tethered unless necessary for veterinary treatment or transport. Leg chains are used to limit animal's movements, for example during husbandry and medical procedures and to separate animals. Leg chains should be alternated from left front/right rear to the opposite front and rear legs every other day. The chains should be long enough to allow the elephants to easily lie down. All chains and attachment devices should be inspected daily, and staff should be trained in their proper use.
- b. Elephant Restraint Device (ERD) is a device used to keep an elephant in a designated space in order to facilitate husbandry and medical procedures. There are many different designs of ERDs, stationary, electric, hydraulic and even ones capable of turning an elephant on its side.

All elephant facilities should install an Elephant Restraint Device (ERD). However, it is strongly recommended that every facility managing bulls or elephants in protected contact have an ERD. Use of the ERD should not be weather dependent. Each elephant should be trained to regularly enter and stay in the ERD to allow for basic husbandry needs, veterinary procedures, reproductive assessments, and other procedures, to occur in a safe and efficient manner. If a facility does not have an ERD, staff should demonstrate a method of restraint that allows necessary husbandry, veterinary, and reproductive procedures to occur in a safe and efficient manner.

3. Safety Tools:

- a. Pepper Spray
- b. Fire extinguisher
- c. Electrical devices designed for use on livestock, such as commercially manufactured electric prods may be used to fend off an elephant attack.
- d. Tranquilizer Gun: To tranquilize an escaped or highly agitated elephant.
- e. Elephant Gun: To dispatch an escaped elephant when there is immediate danger to human life.

Husbandry

- All elephants should be visually inspected on a daily basis. A general assessment should be made and any unusual activities should be promptly recorded in the daily log. Specifically, reports should include observations of the individual elephants such as condition of urine and feces, eating and drinking patterns, administration of medications (if any), and general condition and behavior.
- All elephants' skin should be thoroughly inspected on a daily basis and cared for as needed through bathing, removal of dead skin, and treatment of dry skin or other skin problems.
- All elephants should be trained to permit a complete daily body exam (including feet, eyes, ears, open mouth and tongue, teeth, and tusks) for any sign of abnormalities. Results should be documented in the elephants' health records.

Facilities

- If the captive elephant population is to become sustainable, it is necessary to create housing for many more adult males. All facilities should consider including holding space for adult males. Holding space for males must be designed to best care for the male elephant in musth, allowing him space to move and exercise safely.

- Facilities should have the ability to manage social compatibility as well as dominance and aggression within an elephant group.
- Facilities should have the ability to manage introductions and separations such as a new female to a herd, females to males for breeding, a newborn calf to its mother, and a calf and mother to the herd.
- Facilities should provide an opportunity for each elephant to exercise and to interact socially with other elephants.
- All facilities should have the ability to separate and isolate animals to address behavioral concerns or allow veterinary procedures to occur.
- All enclosures should be cleaned and disinfected daily. Frequent manure removal during the day is recommended and may be necessary for both sanitary and aesthetic conditions.

Indoor

- Indoor space should provide adequate room for elephants to move about and lie down without restriction.
- Mature elephants can reach items with their trunks at a vertical height of 20ft (6.1 m) and potentially higher. Consideration of this should be given with regard to ceiling heights and fixtures (e.g., lights, heating units, plumbing, etc.) so that elephants do not harm themselves or the facility.
- Indoor holding areas should be ventilated, and heated to a minimum temperature of at least 55 degrees F (12.8 degrees C) at all times of the year.
- Natural daylight cycles are adequate for elephants. Indoor areas should be well illuminated during daylight hours, followed by a period of darkness. The use of natural light utilizing skylights and/or windows is suggested.
- Standing water in indoor floor areas can cause foot problems and become a breeding ground for contaminants. Floors should therefore be impervious to water, quick to dry, and sloped to a drain. Floor surfaces should be relatively smooth, but not smooth enough so that they become slippery when wet. Conversely, very rough surfaces may cause excessive wear or irritate footpads.

Outdoor

- Outdoor areas should have enough space for animals to get away from each other if they wish and be large enough for adequate exercise opportunities.
- Environmental enrichment programs and the physical condition of the elephants should also be taken into consideration when evaluating space.
- During daylight hours, healthy elephants kept outdoors can tolerate a wide range of temperature extremes. Provisions should be made to protect

elephants from adverse weather, including cold winds, chilling rain, sleet, sun, heat, etc. Elephants kept outdoors without access to heated facilities should be monitored frequently at temperatures below freezing.

- While outdoors, all elephants should have access to shade during daylight hours in temperatures above 80 degrees F (27 degrees C). Elephants kept outdoors should be monitored frequently at temperatures above 90 degrees (32 degrees C).
- Outdoor yard surfaces should consist primarily of natural substrates (e.g., soil, sand, grass) that provide good drainage and have a cleanable, dry area for feeding.
- Elephants should be kept outdoors on natural substrates as much as possible. Facilities should consider designing elephant areas that allow elephants outdoor access twenty-four hours a day - weather, health, and safety issues permitting.

Barriers

- Elephant containment barriers should be in good condition and able to prevent elephant escapes. A wide variety of building materials can be used as long as they are able to withstand the elephant's strength, contain the elephant in a specific space, and allow adequate space between the elephant and the public.
- Door and gate design is extremely important to ensure the safety of both elephants and keeper staff. Doors and gates should be engineered to withstand extreme force. If mechanical opening devices, such as hydraulic or electrically powered drives are used, they should be able to be operated manually or with a backup generator in the case of a power failure.
- Doors should be designed so that the person operating the doors are able to see the doorway, either directly or via indirect means such as closed circuit cameras.
- All doors should be designed so that they can be stopped immediately in the event an elephant steps in the path of an operating door.
- The use of poorly designed dry moats (moats that are steep, deep, narrow-sided, and hard-bottomed) as primary containment can be particularly dangerous for elephants and their use should be carefully considered. A written elephant extraction protocol should be in place in any facility using moats directly around elephant areas.
- Electric fences and similar devices have been used successfully to protect trees and like items from elephants. If used as a primary containment barrier, elephants should be monitored constantly.

Behavior

- Elephant management facilities should make every effort to maintain elephants in social groupings. It is inappropriate to keep highly social female elephants singly. Elephant care staff should be aware of each animal's social compatibility and the dominance hierarchies of the herd.
- The minimum age offspring should remain with their mothers is two years. Some flexibility is necessary in cases of maternal rejection and when infants cannot be reestablished in their social group.
- Adult males may be housed alone, but not in complete isolation. Opportunities for tactile, olfactory, visual, and/or auditory interaction with other elephants should be provided.

Reproduction

- Each male and female elephant of reproductive age (approximately 8 to 35 years) should have hormone (progesterone or testosterone) values assessed through weekly (or bi-weekly) collection of blood, urine or fecal samples. Exceptions are elephants with known reproductive problems or those with documented medical/behavioral conditions that preclude them from breeding.
- Each male and female elephant of reproductive age (approximately 8 to 35 years) should have an initial reproductive assessment and follow-up assessments every 2-3 years by transrectal ultrasound to verify reproductive status and assess overall reproductive health. Exceptions include elephants with known reproductive problems, actively breeding animals, or those with documented medical/behavioral conditions that preclude them from breeding.

Veterinary Care

- A veterinarian with experience in large mammal medicine should be on call at all times to perform elephant health evaluations, oversee treatment and medical emergencies.
- A veterinarian should give each elephant a thorough annual physical examination.
- A veterinarian or trained veterinary technician should perform fecal examinations to look for parasites and other potential problems at least twice a year. Results should be documented in the elephants' health records.
- For management purposes, all elephants should be trained to accept injections, oral medications, insertion of ear or leg vein catheters, treatment of wounds, biological sample collection, enemas, and urogenital

examinations. All elephants should have serum samples obtained at least quarterly and stored for future reference.

- It is recommended that baseline foot radiographs or thermographs of all adult elephants be taken and kept on file. In some facilities, it may be appropriate to annually monitor selected elephants (i.e., those who have a history of chronic foot problems).
- Facilities must adhere to USDA APHIS requirements for the annual testing and for treatment of tuberculosis.

Nutrition

- High quality and nutritionally correct food should be provided daily in sufficient quantities to maintain elephant health, appropriate weight and should be formulated to provide a complete elephant diet.
- Elephants should have daily access to clean, fresh drinking water. When water containers are used, drinking water containers should be cleaned and refreshed daily.
- Fresh browse and produce should be used often as dietary supplements and enrichment for the animals.
- All elephants' body weight should be assessed and recorded a minimum of twice a year through actual weighing, or through the use of standardized body measurement tables, photographs, or similar, previously validated techniques.
- Obesity is a major concern for the long-term health of the captive elephant population.

Conservation, Education, and Research

The goal of Education, Conservation and Research Activities is to enhance the appreciation and understanding of elephants and their ecosystems and support elephants and habitat in range countries. An informed visitor is more likely to support research and conservation of elephants and of their habitat.

- Every elephant facility should institute a program to educate visitors and promote an improved understanding about elephants and elephant conservation issues.
- Every elephant facility should have up-to-date educational graphics and/or information about elephants on display to the public.
- Facilities that currently manage or desire to manage elephants should make every effort to contribute to conservation through public education, scientific research, and the financial support of field conservation projects.

- It is the responsibility of every elephant facility to contribute in some manner to in situ and ex situ research and conservation of elephants.