



THE ELEPHANT MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

STANDARD GUIDELINES FOR ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT

The Elephant Managers Association (EMA) is an international nonprofit organization consisting of professional elephant handlers, administrators, veterinarians, researchers and elephant enthusiasts. The Association is dedicated to the welfare of the world's elephants through conservation, husbandry, research, education and communication. The EMA collaborates with other professional groups and regulatory agencies to address matters relating to elephant care and management. These guidelines were designed to assist facilities that currently hold or are planning to maintain elephants. Our members, who are elephant managers in all environments, adhere to a Code of Professional Ethics and are committed to providing elephant care at the highest professional level.

The EMA recommends that, at a minimum, the following guidelines for the care and management of elephants is met, regardless of management or handling system used. This Standard Guidelines for Elephant Management is intended as a living document that will be re-evaluated and updated as elephant management techniques change.

1. Management

- 1.1 Facilities should have the ability to manage social compatibility as well as dominance and aggression within an elephant group.
- 1.2 Facilities should have the ability to manage introductions and separations to address behavioral concerns or allow veterinary procedures.
- 1.3 All facilities should have the ability to treat and medicate an elephant if necessary.
- 1.4 Facilities should provide an opportunity for each elephant to exercise and to interact socially with other elephants.
- 1.5 All enclosures should be cleaned of excrement daily. Frequent manure removal during the day is recommended and may be necessary for both sanitary conditions and aesthetic purposes.

- 1.6 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 conditions.
- 1.7 Personnel should have the ability to provide care for elephants feet as needed.
- 1.9 A comprehensive reproductive assessment should be performed on all elephants of reproductive age.

2. Environmental Variables

2.1 Temperature

- a) 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.
- b) 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).
- c) Indoor holding areas should be ventilated, and have the capability of heating to a minimum temperature of at least 55 degrees F (12.8 degrees C) at all times of the year.

2.2 Illumination

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.

3. Space

- 3.1 Indoor space should provide adequate room for elephants to move about and lie down without restriction.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Environmental enrichment programs and the physical condition of the elephants should also be taken into consideration when evaluating space.
- 3.4 Mature elephants can reach with their trunks items 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.
- 3.5 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.

4. Barriers

- 4.1 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 elephants' strength, contain the elephant in a specific space, and allow adequate space between the animal and the public.
- 4.2 Door and gate design is extremely important to ensure the safety of both elephants and keeper staff. Both 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 persons operating the doors are able to see the doorway, either directly or via indirect means such as closed circuit cameras, while operating the door. 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.
- 4.3 Poorly designed dry moats can pose a substantial threat to elephants and their use should be carefully considered. Moats that are deep, narrow-sided, and hard-bottomed can be particularly dangerous for elephants. A written elephant extraction protocol should be in place in any facility using moats directly around elephant areas.
- 4.4 Electric wires have been used successfully to protect trees and like items in elephant areas. If electric fencing is used as a principal containment barrier, elephants should be monitored constantly.

5. Substrate

- 5.1 Elephants should be kept outdoors on natural substrates as much as possible. Facilities should consider designing elephant areas that allow elephants outdoor access the majority of the day - weather, health, and safety issues permitting.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 Indoor area - 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.

6. Nutrition

- 6.1 Elephants should have daily access to clean, fresh drinking water. When water containers are used, drinking water containers should be cleaned and refreshed daily.
- 6.2 Water should be offered at least two times a day. Temperature should be taken into consideration and water may be offered more frequently. Free choice of water is not a requirement.
- 6.3 Fresh browse and produce should be used often as dietary supplements and enrichment for the animals; however the majority of diet should be hay.

- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Weight should be monitored by the use of scales or weight tape. Overweight elephants should have their food intake and exercise adjusted. Under weight elephants should be examined by a veterinarian for medical causes.

7. Medical Management

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 A veterinarian should give each elephant a thorough annual physical examination.
- 7.3 All elephants should be visually inspected on a daily basis. A general assessment should be made and any unusual behavior 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.
- 7.4 A veterinarian or trained veterinary technician should perform fecal examinations to look for parasites and other potential medical issues at least once a year. Results should be documented in the elephants' health records.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 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.
- 7.7 For management purposes, all elephants should be trained to accept injections, oral medications, insertion of ear or leg vein catheters, and treatment of wounds, biological sample collection, enemas, and urogenital examinations.
- 7.8 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).
- 7.9 Facilities should adhere to USDA APHIS requirements for the annual testing and for treatment of tuberculosis.

8. Group Composition

- 8.1 Offspring should remain with their mothers at least 1 ½ years. Some flexibility is necessary in cases of maternal rejection and when infants cannot be reestablished in their social group.
- 8.2 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.

- 8.3 Females should not be housed alone long term and should have regular access to herd mates.

9. Policies/Protocols

Each facility that manages elephants should have a written elephant management policy. The following is a list of protocols that should be incorporated in the management policy. This list is not complete and any facility may want to include more. This management policy should be reviewed and updated annually.

- Elephant management program's missions and goals.
- Elephant management policies, including guidelines for handling and training.
- 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).
- The EMA recommends that written safety protocols be developed and adhered to when visitor-elephant interactions take place.
- The EMA recommends members develop and adhere to written safety protocols for public elephant rides.
- The EMA recommends that a minimum of two qualified 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 handling and care of elephants.
- Elephant facilities should maintain a behavioral profile for each individual elephant and update it annually.
- Elephant facilities should have a written environmental enrichment plan for their elephants and show evidence of implementation.
- Elephant care staff should be aware of each animal's social compatibility and the dominance hierarchies of the herd.
- Each elephant facility should have a written protocol for routine foot care and show evidence of its implementation. This protocol should include daily cleaning and inspection of elephant's feet.
- A written daily exercise program for each individual animal should be designed and followed. The program should be developed in consultation with the elephant manager, elephant handlers, and the staff veterinarian(s).

10. Reproduction

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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. All elephants should have serum samples obtained at least quarterly and stored for future reference.
- 10.3 Breeding age males should be trained so that semen can be collected.

11. Behavior management

- 11.1 Training - Trained behaviors should allow the elephant care staff access to the animal in order to accomplish all necessary animal care and management procedures, such as; foot care, blood draws, veterinary care, etc. 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.
- 11.2 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. The goal of a good trainer is to be able to reduce the amount of times any particular training tool is used.
 - a) Management Tools
 - (1) 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.
 - (2) 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.
 - (3) Bridge (Whistle/Clicker/Voice): A cue tells the elephant that they have achieved the desired behavior.
 - b) Ropes, Block & Tackle: These may be used to direct an elephant through a desired behavior. It also can be used to assist raise debilitated or partially anesthetized

animals to their feet to ensure their recovery. Ropes may also be used to aid in training a new behavior.

- c) Chains: Leg chains are used to limit animals' movements, for example during husbandry and medical procedures and to separate animals. When used daily, leg chains should be alternated from left front/right rear to right front/ left rear 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.
- d) Elephant Restraint Device (ERD): This is a device to keep an elephant in a designated space in order to facilitate husbandry and medical procedures. There are many different designs of ERDs, from stationary to hydraulically operated, capable of turning an elephant on its side. Each facility needs to determine their needs.
- e) Tub, Balance Beam, Spindle: Tools that have been used for daily exercise programs during demonstrations or exercise. Some of these have also been used or modified to enable foot care on elephants.

11.3 Safety Tools - Safety Tools should be made available to staff working around elephants. Staff should be instructed in their proper use. Safety tools are to be used only when the life of a human or animal is in danger. They may be used to separate animals during a fight or to fend off an attack. The following are examples of widely used safety tools:

- a) Pepper Spray, Fire extinguisher, Electrical devices designed for use on livestock, such as commercially manufactured electric prods.
- b) Tranquilizer Gun: Used to tranquilize an escaped or highly agitated elephant.
- c) Elephant Gun: Used to dispatch an escaped elephant when there is immediate danger to human life.

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.

12. Management Systems

The EMA guidelines for elephant management recognize that a diversity of approaches exist along the continuum of elephant management. The EMA also recognizes that the best elephant management system may be a combination of systems. 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.

13. Safety

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 fully 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 record should be reviewed by the appropriate staff members and its recommendations acted upon accordingly

14. Restraint

- 14.1 Chaining is an acceptable method of temporary restraint. However, facilities should limit the time elephants spend tethered unless necessary for veterinary treatment or transport. Facilities that regularly use chains for some portion of a day should alternate the chained foot on a daily basis.
- 14.2 All elephant facilities should install an Elephant Restraint Device (ERD). However, all facilities managing bulls, as well as those that manage elephants in protected contact should have an ERD. Use of the ERD should not be weather dependent.
- 14.3 Each elephant should be trained to regularly enter and stay in the ERD for husbandry, veterinary procedures, reproductive assessments, and other procedures, to allow these to occur in a safe and efficient manner.
- 14.4 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.

15. Staff Organization and Training

- 15.1 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. The elephant manager should demonstrate knowledge about all emergency protocols and continually improve elephant management techniques as the industry guidelines evolve.
- 15.2 All elephant managers are encouraged to develop their skills by visiting other facilities, attending the Elephant Managers Association annual conference, and courses such as Riddle's Elephant Management School and AZA Principles of Elephant Management Course.
- 15.3 The EMA encourages each facility to develop and implement a personnel-training protocol to document new employee training and acceptance as a qualified elephant handler.

16. Conservation, Education, and Research

- 16.1 The goal of Education Programs is to enhance the appreciation and understanding of elephants and their ecosystems. An informed visitor is more likely to support research and conservation of elephants and of their habitat.
- a) Every elephant facility should institute a program to educate visitors and promote an improved understanding about elephants and elephant conservation issues.
 - b) Every elephant facility should have up-to-date educational graphics and/or information about elephants on display to the public.
 - c) A copy of the EMA Education Manual is available at www.elephant-managers.com.
- 16.2 Conservation and Research Activities
- a) 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.
 - b) It is the responsibility of every elephant facility to contribute in some manner to in situ and ex situ research and conservation of elephants.
 - c) Key messages in regards to Elephant Conservation are available on the AZA Elephant TAG website, www.elephanttag.org.

For additional information about elephant management – particularly management in various environments – refer to publications such as the Association of Zoos and Aquariums Elephant Husbandry Manual (North America), the Elephant Managers of America Guidelines for the Welfare of elephants in Captivity (South America), the Elephant Care Manual for Mahouts and Mangers (Thailand), Practical Elephant Management (India) and the International Elephant Foundation Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide (North America).

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