

## **Evaluation of the elephant program at the Honolulu Zoo**

**Date of visit 5/26/03 through 5/30/03**

**Elephant Protocol-** The zoo has recently updated their elephant management protocol. The document includes changes to the program to adjust to the facility that is scheduled to break ground in September. The document is written in detail and is in compliance with the AZA. The document should be reviewed and revised on an annual basis. It should be approved by management and copied to each elephant keeper.

**Elephant Profiles-** Both elephants had written profiles with current information as required.

**Daily Logs-** The daily logs were completed and reviewed by the Supervisor.

**Behavioral Components-** The primary focus of this trip was to assist the staff in the training needed for the reproductive assessments. The preliminary training was started prior to this visit and within four days both elephants were comfortable with the enemas. Weekly blood is being drawn and the training for the vaginal desense was discussed. The training for 90% of the rest of the behavioral components was either done or in the process of being trained. Those behaviors not observed are: *accepts injections, accepts oral medication, allows veterinary procedures to be performed by a vet and foot x-ray.*

**Elephant Condition and Daily Maintenance-** Elephants were bathed daily, feet and skin were in good condition. Weights of both animals looked good. Increased exercise will improve muscle tone.

**New Staff Training-** New staff training is addressed in the protocol, but problems were discussed regarding failed efforts to introduce a new member to the team. Care should be given when training new staff.

**Staff Development-** The supervisor, elephant manager and one keeper has attended AZA's Principles of Elephant Management course. The elephant manager and one keeper have attended Riddle's elephant management school. This demonstrates a commitment to staff development and the elephant program.

**Safety Procedures-** Safety procedures are in place. Multiple failures to comply with the 'two person' rule observed.

**Elephant Training Procedures-** Daily training sessions were observed and some guidance given. The elephants anticipate many behaviors or commands and often do not wait for instruction. Attention should be given to reinforcements, timing, consistency and the quality of behavior. Improvement was observed throughout the week. More structure and control of the variables needs to take place. The elephants need a more structured training program.

**Communication-** Staff was willing to accept direction and guidance. The circumstances were out of the ordinary as all four staff members were present most days. Typically only two are on duty. The Director received progress reports and the Supervisor was interested in all aspects of the evaluation. I spoke briefly to the attending veterinarian but he was unable to observe any of the training for the reproductive assessments.

**Facility Design/Functionality/Maintenance-** The elephant facility is functional for the two current animals. A new facility is scheduled to start construction this fall and the drawings were reviewed.

**Equipment /Tools/ Maintenance-** Appeared to be adequate.

**Food Storage/Preparation-** Fresh browse was cut and provided daily.

**Public Relations-** Observed daily elephant demonstrations. Staff was courteous and well informed. Grooming could be improved. Presentation was casual and varied from one to the next. Public response was positive. The elephant painting was executed very well by the elephants and the staff and well received by the audience. It is my opinion that the value of these kinds of demonstrations will enhance the visitor experience at the zoo.

**Research Projects-** None were discussed.

**Reproductive History/Future-** None to date. The purpose of this trip was to facilitate the possibility of future reproduction.

**Compatibility of Animals-** Some competition was observed between the two animals.