

Elephant Protocol

Mission Statement

The objective of Seneca Park Zoo's Elephant Management Program is to maintain and exhibit a healthy and tractable group of African elephants, promoting education, conservation and research, in an aesthetically pleasing environment. It is our intention to continue ongoing endocrine monitoring of both elephants and we are dedicated to reproduce via artificial insemination with elephant #1146, Timba/Genny C until she reaches the age of 30.

Introduction

The following information consists of the policies and procedures in the care and handling of our elephants at Seneca Park Zoo. These policies will ensure consistent, humane treatment of the animals and ensure the safest possible workplace for the staff. The adherence to these policies is mandatory. Failure to follow these policies will compromise your safety, the safety of your coworkers and the safety of our elephants. Seneca Park Zoo's elephants are handled in a free contact management system. This is defined by the American Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) as, "Direct handling of an elephant when the keeper and the elephant share the same unrestricted space. Neither the use of chains or the posture of the elephant alters this definition." All policies and procedures of the program are designed to meet or exceed AZA's Elephant Management Guidelines. This document is to be reviewed semiannually by staff and management and updated as needed.

Management History of the Current Elephants at Seneca Park Zoo

Seneca Park Zoo's two African elephants arrived in May 1979, at which time they were aged at approximately 1 1/2 and 2 years. The elephants were kept with no formal management program until they reached an age and size when they began to become uncontrollable and aggressive towards keepers. In 1983, the Zoo hired a management consultant, and through his training, our current free contact management program was implemented.

In the winter of 1999, it was decided to again hire a consultant to assess our program. The consultant came and spent several days working closely with the elephant staff. Our program was critiqued and staff evaluated. It has been our practice to utilize a consultant on a regular basis, with visits in 1999, 2001 and 2005.

Personnel

1. The Elephant Management Committee (EMC) consists of: the Elephant Manager, General Curator, Assistant Director, Director, Veterinarian and fully trained Elephant Handlers. Weekly meetings with the Elephant Manager and Handlers are held to discuss all aspects of health, management and exhibit maintenance. The committee's approval is required for any major changes in procedures or existing routines and methods.
2. Each staff member, to work with the elephants, is trained by experienced elephant Handlers, as they work their daily routine. Training is supervised by the Elephant Manager.

“Mechanic” is the first stage of training. This person is responsible for maintenance work with the elephants: cleaning exhibits, bathing, foot care, medical procedures, feeding and watering, as well as basic restraint procedures. The trainee will work side by side with an experienced handler or mechanic, until he/she has learned all aspects of the daily care of the elephants, all the safety procedures necessary and completed the Mechanic Training Check list.

After an attendant is trained as a mechanic, he/she may enter the next stage of training as a Handler. The Handler maintains control over the elephant(s) and commands them so they are in a position for elephant staff to work on or around them. The trainee will work side by side with an experienced Handler according to The Elephant Handler Training Outline

The program strives to consist of three regular handlers in the area. Other trained handlers not regularly scheduled in the section are rotated in at a minimum of twice a week, so that they maintain their relationships with the elephants and stay familiar with the routine.

Any non-elephant personnel must be approved by the Area Supervisor or Supervisor of the Day before entering the elephant enclosure. Two trained handlers must always accompany such persons.

To ensure consistency and safety of the program, personnel will be evaluated by the Elephant Manager on a regular basis to confirm that the elephant protocol is being followed. If problems occur with any elephant personnel, it is to be brought to the attention of the Elephant Manager and the EMC to be reviewed and resolved. Violation of this protocol may result in removal from the elephant program. Any EMC member with knowledge of violation of this protocol is responsible for informing the Elephant Manager, or proper channels in their absence. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action.

Guidelines for Daily Management

1. Elephants are inspected first thing in the morning. Any health problems observed are to be reported immediately to the supervisor of the day. Likewise, any damage that compromises the security of the exhibit must be reported immediately.
2. A Daily Keeper Report, submitted to the Supervisor of the Day, includes any health problems, injury, unusual behavior, diet consumption and medications administered, as well as requests for equipment, diet alterations or maintenance.
3. A daily log is kept by the handlers to document the same information as in the Daily Keeper Report (DKR), as well as to keep a record of the elephants' behavior, training being done, a record of foot care done on each elephant and training of staff, etc.
4. The exhibit is to remain secured at all times. Doors and gates are to be locked, electric fence is to be on if keepers are not in the exhibit with the elephants. The bar behind stockade gates of yard is to be secured whenever elephants are in the yard. Only trained staff should be in the areas that are occupied by the elephants.
5. A footbath consisting of 1 part chlorine, 32 parts water is to be used by anyone entering the area. This is located inside the hay room door. This must be made fresh every morning, and should be changed throughout the day if it gets low or dirty.
6. Elephants can be put outdoors in any temperature, as long as they are dry under the armpits. If they are wet, the outdoor temperature must be at least 40° F. Care must be taken in temperatures below 40° F. Elephants should be checked often, by feeling ears, to determine if they need to be brought in due to chilling. If the elephants are seen shivering or standing by the door to come in, and seem uncomfortable they are to be brought in to get warmed up. In extreme conditions (below 30° F) they should be closely attended. Note cold weather protocol. The temperature of the inside exhibit is controlled by the thermostat which is located between the hay room door and trellis. The heater in the back room has a thermostat which is located in the cage next to the heater. The thermostat for the floor heat pump is located in front of the ocelot switch exhibit. Thermostats are set according to the temperatures posted in the hay room on the Monthly To Do List. The indoor rooms are to be maintained minimally at 55 degrees.
7. The elephants are to have access to shade when the temperature is 80 degrees or when exposed to direct sunlight.
8. The elephants are chained for their daily bath. This is the only routine chaining, at this time. The elephants are very comfortable with this procedure and it keeps them used to their chains.
9. When chaining an elephant, always chain a front leg first; and when unchaining, always unchain a rear leg first. If for any reason, an elephant has to be left with only one chain on, it should be on a front leg. It is unsafe to leave a chain on just a rear leg. If an elephant has two chains on, they should be on the right front, and left rear legs, or the left front and right rear legs. The length of chains should be such that the elephant cannot touch its chained feet together when turning. The elephants are normally chained during baths, veterinary procedures and when handlers deem restraint necessary. If conditions would require the elephants to be restrained (medical, natural disaster, etc) for a period exceeding eight hours, the restraints would be alternated at a minimum

of once over a 24 hour period. This ensures that no leg is restrained for an excessive period. When restraining the elephants legs the following guidelines are followed.

- a. The front leg is restrained in such a way that the bracelet is allowed to move freely around the leg. The suggested gap between the leg and the restraint is 2 inches.
- b. The rear leg is restrained in such a way that aprox. a 1/2-inch gap should be maintained between the leg and restraint, and the chain does not fall down on the ankle.

If the need arises, the addition of one or more restraints or the shortening of any restraint can be performed. Always keep in mind that the safety of humans and the animals are given the highest priority.

10. Elephants are fed according to the posted diet sheet (see Attachment B). Hay consumption is monitored to prevent over or underfeeding. All feed is to be inspected for mold, foreign materials and quality.
11. During warm weather, the elephants may have free choice water running water and the mud pool in the yard. In colder temperatures free choice water can be given by the spicket in the front room. If free choice water is not available during the day, the elephants are given water at least twice a day. The elephant in the front room has access to running water overnight.
12. Elephants are to be bathed daily. This can range from a shower to being fully scrubbed. All stains (e.g. manure) are to be scrubbed off completely, and the elephants' nails and feet are to be checked and scrubbed daily. Warm water is used in colder months. All areas of skin should be scrubbed regularly to prevent build-up of dead skin. Occasionally, they may be "butchered blocked", using a metal brush-like tool to scrape off dead skin. When bathing each elephant, the entire body is inspected for any cuts, scrapes, abscesses or other health problems. In the fall and winter months, petroleum jelly is applied to dry areas: backs and edges of ears, temples, elbows, nipples and tail tip. Mineral oil can also be used on the backs of the ears (when available). This is to be done with caution in the summer months due to the possibility of sunburn. If moisturizer is needed it should be applied at night.
13. Any minor cut or scratch is flushed with water and covered with betadine ointment, Blu – Kote, or Corona cream. Any injury that is more than superficial should be reported immediately to the Supervisor of the Day. Occasionally, the elephant(s) eyes become irritated for various reasons. (e.g. dust) When an irritation (not an infection) occurs, attendants may lubricate the irritated eye(s) with an ophthalmic ointment approved by the veterinarian.
14. Blood is drawn from each elephant weekly from the ear or hind leg. Our goal is to continue to submit samples for various research (reproductive, genetic).
15. Foot care is performed routinely and as needed on each elephant. This procedure is outlined in the Elephant Foot Care Procedures Section.
16. The elephants are to be weighed at least once a month.
17. The elephants are measured annually, in July.

18. Inside floors should be kept as dry as possible to keep moisture and bacteria away from elephants' feet. Any standing water should be squeegeed off.
19. Trunk flushes are performed annually on both elephants to check for TB.
20. In the fall months, the yard should be cleared as much as possible of acorns and oak leaves before the elephants are put out to prevent possible illness.
21. A behavioral profile is maintained for each individual elephant and updated annually.
22. The elephants are exercised as often as possible. They are walked outside of their enclosure approx. 6x/week in the summer months and as often as possible in the colder months. Ice on the walkways is a safety issue that needs to be evaluated in the winter months. The elephants are walked throughout the Zoo. The Handlers walk as long and as far as time and staffing allows. This is a part of the minimum daily routine. Walks are done before the Zoo is open to the public. Exercise is very important for the elephant's health, for both their mental and physical well being. Daily workouts and bath routines are also a part of keeping the elephant's in good body condition. Obesity in elephants can lead to a variety of health problems. Every effort must be made to keep the elephants active, throughout the day.
23. The elephants are separated over night. During the winter months, one elephant is locked in the front room overnight and one is locked in the back room. The barred gate is closed between the rooms so that the elephants are separated but are allowed to have contact with each other if they choose. A pin and lock is placed in the door. During the summer months, one elephant is locked in the front room, and one is given access to the back room and the yard.