

POSITION STATEMENT ON LONE ELEPHANTS IN UK ZOOS

The Zoo Licensing Act (1981) as described by the Secretary of States Standards of Modern Zoo Practice outlines the following requirements for the management of Elephants:

- Appropriate social grouping is key to successful elephant management and must be pre-eminent in all aspects of elephant care.
- Elephants should have social contact with other elephants at all times.
- A zoo should maximise opportunities for every elephant to have unrestricted physical contact with other members of the herd for as many hours each day as possible.
- Female elephants must have social contact with other elephants at all times.
- Bull elephants must be given the option to be in social contact with other elephants if they choose, only being separated when necessary for their welfare and the welfare of the herd.
- Zoos must demonstrate through behaviour profiling and behaviour monitoring, evidence to inform decisions for the translocation of bulls.
- Zoos should minimise the time that individuals within the herd are physically separated through management.

The Elephant Welfare Group endorses these requirements, but recognises that in rare, specific, defined circumstances the most acceptable available option for an individual elephant may be to be housed alone. Lone Elephants are typically elephants that are managed in a collection as a single elephant. Consideration must also be given to elephants managed in isolation in a facility that has a larger elephant herd on site, these animals having limited but occasional social contact but are not considered to have appropriate social opportunities for a prolonged period that are expected in any modern zoo elephant herd structure.

Where the move of a lone elephant out of a collection is prohibited for any reason a zoo **must** investigate the option of bringing in additional elephants if the facility or the individual physical and behavioural characteristics of the lone elephant allow it.

Decisions made around the social management of lone elephants including any decision to continue to maintain a lone elephant or lone herd elephant must be reached through a documented structured due-diligence process which **MUST** include:

- Evidence-based consideration of the long-term options for optimal social management of the individual elephant.
- Behavioural and welfare assessment by a suitably qualified and experienced expert.
- Veterinary assessment by a suitably qualified and experienced veterinarian.
- Justification of the rejection of any potential transfer locations.
- Justification of the rejection of any potential transfers into the collection.
- In cases of chronic debilitation, justification and life-time care plans, including consideration of euthanasia where an animal is compromised to a point that precludes transportation.
- Consideration of the final decision and associated evidence base by the institution's ethics committee, to be **reviewed on an annual basis** at a minimum or more frequently depending on the nature of the justification.

Any such reviews should be made available for any reasonable requests, including Secretary of State Specialist Elephant Zoo Licence Inspectors. The annual review process should be integrated into the Long Term Management Plans for the individual animal and copies submitted to BIAZA on an annual basis, no later than the 1st April.

Where the lone elephant ethical review process determines that the situation for a lone elephant has potential to be resolved, either through export of the animal to a more suitable facility or through import of additional elephants into the collection, the zoo **must resolve the situation within a maximum of two years**, this takes into consideration that any elephant transfers requires external stakeholder support, principally the activities of the EEP. Any such resolution strategies are expected to be enacted in conjunction with enforcement actions

issued by the Secretary of State Specialist Elephant Zoo Licence Inspectors to ensure compliance with the current SSSMZP.

Potential considerations for lone elephants include:

- An individual is isolated due to infectious disease management, either in the medium term or the long-term where reintroduction into a herd may compromise the health of the larger herd population or is prohibited by legislation e.g. tuberculosis.
- The health of the lone elephant would be significantly compromised in the long-term by the process of transportation and is housed in a facility unable to accommodate additional elephants.
- An elephant is compromised physically, precluding transport, and the holding collection does not have appropriate facilities that allow the import of additional elephants.
- There is no suitable elephant facility able or willing to take the lone elephant. A facility may be unsuitable due to length of transport required; facilities for separation and introduction of unfamiliar elephants are not in place; there are population impact concerns for the receiving collection (e.g. EEHV infection or fragile social grouping); or availability of experience and expertise required to care for the specific needs of the individual lone elephant are not present at a particular time.
- Bulls are maintained in isolation as part of management regimes as indicated by social and behavioural assessment, for instance as they reach sexual maturity in a matriarchal herd, these are expected to be short-term only prior to transfer to another facility, no more than 3 months.
- The health or welfare of an elephant with a physical disability, such as compromised vision, could be significantly compromised in the long-term by being housed in an unfamiliar facility.
- Euthanasia must be a consideration for an elephant that is chronically maintained in a debilitated state that precludes it being moved nor allows the situation to be changed within the current zoo where it resides.