



IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

Quick Facts about Elephants in Zoos

SPACE

Wild elephants can walk ten or more miles a day, yet zoos commonly hold them in enclosures of a few acres or less. (There are 640 acres in one square mile.) This is totally inadequate for earth's largest land mammal, which can weigh 7,000-10,000 pounds.

FOOT AND JOINT DISEASE

Lack of space for movement and hard surfaces, like concrete and compacted soil, wreak havoc on elephants' feet and joints.

Over 60 percent of elephants in zoos suffer from foot disease and nearly half suffer from arthritis.



Deteriorated feet of Calle, a 27-year old elephant at San Francisco Zoo who was euthanized in 2004.

These conditions are the leading cause of euthanasia in captive elephants, but are preventable if elephants are given the space and natural conditions they need.

Eight of the 11 elephants who died at Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) accredited zoos since January 2006 suffered from foot and/or joint disease.

NEUROTIC BEHAVIORS

The stress of intense confinement in unnatural zoo exhibits, the boredom from barren environments,

and social traumas caused by routine separation of bonded elephant pairs and of mothers and calves produces aberrant behaviors.



Joni, an elephant at the Greenville Zoo in South Carolina, repetitively rocks in the tiny and barren concrete and compacted-earth exhibit where she has lived for 30 years.

This includes aggression toward keepers and other elephants as well as stereotypic (neurotic) behaviors like repetitive rocking, swaying, and head bobbing.

LACK OF SUCCESS IN BREEDING ELEPHANTS

Elephants breed poorly in zoos, a sign that physical, social and emotional needs are not being met in a traditional zoo setting.

Infant mortality is high, with 41 percent of Asian elephant calves and 50 percent of African elephant calves dying before their first birthday.

By contrast, infant mortality rates for studied wild elephant populations are 10-14 percent.

Since 2001, at least 14 elephant pregnancies have ended in stillbirth, or other complications, including calf death during labor, euthanasia

of premature calves, and failure to thrive. By contrast, there have been just five stillbirths in over 1,500 observed births in the wild elephant population in Amboseli National Park in Kenya.

PREMATURE DEATH

Zoo-induced health problems like foot disease and arthritis claim elephant lives prematurely.

More than half of the 54 elephants who died at AZA zoos since 2000 failed to reach the age of 40, dying decades short of their natural lifespan of 60-70 years.

SANCTUARIES SET THE BAR FOR THE CARE OF ELEPHANTS IN CAPTIVITY

Today, the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee and PAWS' Ark 2000 elephant sanctuary in California have surpassed zoos in the care of captive elephants.



The Elephant Sanctuary and its 2,300-acre Asian elephant habitat

These facilities provide hundreds to thousands of acres of natural habitat, varied topography, ponds, and soft ground. Such conditions have restored quality of life to elephants debilitated by years of confinement in zoos and circuses.