



# **Elephant Management Policy & Elephant Keeper Handbook**

**(Seventh Edition)**

*Revised January 2013*



*Photo by BPZ's Kristy Katerle*

## **Acknowledgement of Receipt of the Buttonwood Park Zoo Elephant Management Policy**

My signature acknowledges that I have received a copy of the Buttonwood Park Zoo Elephant Management Policy, seventh edition. I understand that the policy is used to ensure a consistent foundation around which our elephant management program operates. The policy outlines the Buttonwood Park Zoo's philosophy, procedures, and goals for managing elephants and will be updated annually or as frequently as needed to insure the contents of the policy remain current. Any changes to the policy will be reviewed at an Elephant Management Committee (EMC) meeting and posted in the Elephant Keeper Log. All elephant staff are required to initial any posting and acknowledge their understanding of the policy change.

As a member of the elephant care staff, I understand that I am responsible for reading, learning, and practicing the Buttonwood Park Zoo's policies and procedures. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the procedures outlined in this policy.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Table of Contents

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF THE BUTTONWOOD PARK ZOO ELEPHANT MANAGEMENT POLICY .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>SECTION I: PHILOSOPHY, METHODS, &amp; GOALS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Elephant Care Program Philosophy.....	4
Elephant Care Methods .....	4
Elephant Management Goals and Objectives.....	4
<b>SECTION II: KEEPER TRAINING PROGRAM.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>SECTION III: SAFETY .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Staff Safety Rules .....	9
Re-direction of con-specific elephant aggression.....	10
<b>SECTION IV: ELEPHANT TRAINING .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Elephant Handling Tools .....	11
Training Procedures .....	11
Training Techniques .....	12
Verbal Cue List for Learned Behaviors .....	14
<b>SECTION V: ELEPHANT CARE PROCEDURES .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Housing.....	15
Medical Management.....	15
Foot Care Protocol .....	15
Enrichment .....	16
Exercise .....	16
<b>SECTION VI: EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS FOR ELEPHANTS .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Elephant Separation Protocol .....	18
Elephant Introductions .....	19
Evacuation of a person from an elephant enclosure .....	19
Elephant Down Procedure (Elephant unable to arise without assistance) .....	19
Elephant Medical Emergency Response .....	20
Elephant Death .....	20
Elephant Escape .....	20
Accident (Keeper Injury) or Attack .....	20

<b>SECTION VII: PUBLIC RELATIONS.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>SECTION VIII: ELEPHANT PHASE-OUT PLAN.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>SECTION IX: ELEPHANT PROFILES.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>House Name: Emily.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Collection History: .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Physical Characteristics:.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Medical History: .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Behavior/Training History: .....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Incident Reports.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<b>House Name: Ruth.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<i>Collection History: .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Physical Characteristics:.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Medical History: .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Behavior/Training History: .....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Incident Reports.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>28</b>

## **SECTION I: PHILOSOPHY, METHODS, & GOALS**

### **Elephant Care Program Philosophy**

The Buttonwood Park Zoo (BPZ) elephant program is dedicated to providing elephant care in a manner that is safe for both the elephants and their caretakers. Working closely with the elephants provides both physical and mental stimulation for the animals. The elephant program is designed to allow handlers opportunities to observe the animals closely for the detection of physical or psychological changes and strengthen the emotional bond between the handlers and the elephants. The program provides the daily care necessary to maintain the elephants' health and well being. To ensure program consistency, an Elephant Management Committee (EMC) has been formed. The Buttonwood Park Zoo EMC consists of the Zoo Director, Curator, Elephant Manager, Elephant Keepers, Veterinarian and Veterinary Technician. The committee meets as needed to decide questions of policy, training and management protocols.

### **Elephant Care Methods**

Elephant care, whether in a free-contact or protected contact setting, requires routine physical or "hands-on" contact by the caretakers. This is a labor-intensive process that is inherently dangerous. A consistent program that ensures a positive relationship between the animals and the handlers and includes cooperation of the animals is essential for safety.

Currently the BPZ is successfully managing its elephants in a free contact system. Keepers use their knowledge of elephant behavior and the tendencies of our particular animals together with positive reinforcement to provide daily care, enrichment and training in as safe a manner as is possible while sharing space with the elephants. The EMC recognizes that changes to the current management system are necessary to meet AZA guidelines for the care and management of elephants. We are in the process of reviewing our current infrastructure and management program in order to identify the changes necessary to meet current and future standards.

### **Elephant Management Goals and Objectives**

The BPZ Elephant Program has five major goals and objectives.

1. To provide the best possible care for our two elephants for the remainder of their lives.
2. To develop and implement a variety of programs for the public which foster an appreciation for elephants and promote awareness and understanding of conservation issues.

3. To participate and contribute to elephant research activities.
4. To contribute to *in situ* conservation of elephants and habitats abroad.
5. To participate and support the AZA Elephant SSP

Additional details can be found in the Institution Collection Plan and training goals and progress information can be found in the BPZ Enrichment and Training Notebook as well as in Elephant AMC (Animal Management Committee) minutes.

## **Section II: Keeper Training Program**

The training of new keepers is essential to proper care of the zoo's elephants. Emphasis is on safety and consistency when working with or around the elephants. All new elephant keepers go through a (minimum) six-month apprenticeship.

During the initial phase of a new keeper's training period, he/she will work with the Elephant Manager and at least one other qualified elephant handler. The Elephant Manager is responsible for the implementation of the program. He/she is also responsible for coordinating and the training of new staff, instructing each new staff member in every aspect of elephant handling, management, and safety routines as outlined in the Elephant Management Policy.

During the initial phase of training (Level I), the new keeper's duties will include clean up and other related elephant care duties, and familiarization with established zoo and elephant protocols. Once the trainee shows proficiency in all assigned tasks and passes an initial evaluation by the Elephant Manager, he/she will be reviewed by the EMC. Upon EMC approval, he/she will begin to work alongside either the Elephant manager or two qualified elephant handlers, with or without the presence of the Elephant Manager.

At this point in training, the keeper should be familiar with the following:

- ✓ elephant management policy
- ✓ elephant and zoo safety and emergency protocols
- ✓ radio use protocols and emergency codes
- ✓ fire extinguisher locations
- ✓ material data sheet (MSDS) location
- ✓ location of all light switches, circuit breakers, drains, fans, vents, and controls for heating and ventilation system
- ✓ pool maintenance and pool drain operation
- ✓ daily routines including cleaning, feeding, watering, enrichment, training and medical treatments
- ✓ preparation and storage locations of foodstuffs
- ✓ record keeping system including behavior profiles of each elephant, daily keeper log and incident reports for each elephant
- ✓ proper use of the guide
- ✓ basic behavioral cues "Move Up", "Back Up", "Get Over", "Steady"

The trainee should have the ability to assist with animal shifting and elephant procedures in the presence of two qualified elephant handlers. The new keeper must carry a guide while performing daily routines, observe training sessions with the elephants and assist

safely with elephant baths. The keeper should have a basic understanding of elephant “psychology” and operant conditioning.

During the next two months of training (Level II), the duties of the new keeper will include free contact with the elephants for routine husbandry such as feeding, watering and bathing and observation of footwork. Trainees are expected to practice the verbal behavioral cues and utilize the guide on cue points used by the handlers during these routines.

The new keeper will begin issuing verbal cues, learning to work with each of the animals in turn. Progress will be monitored by the Elephant Manager who will issue a recommendation to the EMC that the keeper be moved to the final level of training when he/she accomplishes the following: (in the presence of two qualified elephant keepers)

- ✓ demonstrates the ability to perform routine maintenance of exhibit yards and barn while sharing the same space with elephants in a free contact situation.
- ✓ demonstrates an ability and inclination to develop a positive personal relationship with each elephant
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to work as a team and communicate with fellow elephant handlers, readily accepting and offering critique in a positive manner
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to give verbal cues properly and consistently gain cooperation from the elephants
- ✓ demonstrates the correct method for gaining cooperation , including cue points, physical cues and tone of voice

During the final phase of training, the duties of the new keeper will include the management of each elephant in free contact utilizing all of the verbal cues and cue points established by the BPZ Elephant Management Policy. The new keeper must demonstrate proficiency in all aspects of elephant care, including foot care, skin care, etc. A final satisfactory progress evaluation and recommendation from the Elephant Manager to the Elephant Management Committee is required before the new keeper is considered a qualified elephant keeper. The EMC will meet to consider and approve or delay approval of a keeper as a qualified elephant keeper.

In order to be considered a qualified elephant keeper, the trainee must:

- ✓ demonstrate the ability to give any and all verbal and physical cues properly
- ✓ consistently gain cooperation from the elephants
- ✓ demonstrates an ability and inclination to develop a positive personal relationship with each elephant
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to work as a team and communicate with fellow elephant handlers, readily accepting and offering critique in a positive manner



- ✓ utilize the established method for correcting non-compliance while handling the elephants in daily husbandry and training routines (See “Training Techniques”)
- ✓ demonstrate the ability to consistently and correctly perform and implement all husbandry routines with no direction from the Elephant Manager
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to act as a back up handler when working with another qualified handler
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to present appropriate and accurate information to the public in a professional and courteous manner.
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to correctly perform foot care on the elephants including daily foot inspections and corrective foot trims.
- ✓ demonstrates the ability to identify behavioral and/or medical abnormalities in the elephants as well as implement corrective measures in consultation with appropriate staff (i.e. Elephant Manager, Veterinary staff and other elephant keepers)
- ✓ demonstrate the ability to problem solve

Elephant relief or backup keepers are those keepers who do not work in the elephant area daily. These keepers are qualified handlers, having gone through the same training as all qualified elephant keepers. These keepers can be used as handlers in the case of sick, vacation, compensatory, or personal time use by permanent elephant staff. Elephant relief keepers must consistently demonstrate proficient elephant husbandry skills.

## **Section III: Safety**

Keeper safety is a primary concern when working with elephants. It is everyone's responsibility. If a keeper sees a situation that seems unsafe, it is the keeper's responsibility to immediately alert the individual at risk. Established safety protocols will be enforced. Consistent animal handling protocols are conducive to keeper and animal safety.

The EMC recognizes that elephant facilities and programs require review and modification over time, as management practices, standards and procedures are changed and refined. The BPZ has established a Safety Committee to conduct a semi-annual elephant facility and program safety assessment to identify safety needs, and implement corrective measures. The team includes but is not limited to: elephant staff, keeper staff, management, veterinary staff and experts in the area of risk management and safety. The makeup of the team is based on zoo needs and resources. A written record of each inspection is available for review by staff.

### **Staff Safety Rules**

1. No elephant keeper is allowed to enter the elephant enclosure without a guide and an EMC approved backup.
2. All elephant personnel must carry a functional 2-way radio at all times during working hours.
3. Only qualified members of the elephant staff issue cues to the elephants.
4. Non-elephant personnel are only allowed to enter an elephant enclosure in the presence of two qualified elephant keepers.
5. Zoo visitors are not allowed in the elephant barn or allowed access to the elephant exhibit without the permission of the Elephant Manager. In the absence of the Elephant Manager, access may be granted by Unit C (Management) personnel. Unit C must be notified when visitors are about to enter the elephant area.
6. Visitor-Elephant interactions outside of the primary enclosure must be approved by the Elephant Management Committee, Elephant Manager and/or Director.
7. All perimeter gates near the elephant enclosure must be kept locked at all times.
8. All gates and doors leading into the elephant barn must be kept locked when elephant keepers are not in the building/exhibit. If the elephants are on exhibit, barn doors may be left open for ventilation.
9. Only elephant keepers and senior staff have keys to the elephant areas.
10. Tools and equipment must never be left within reach of the elephants unsupervised.
11. Maintenance work in or around elephant areas must have prior approval by supervisory and elephant staff.

12. The elephant exhibit must be monitored at all times.

### **Re-direction of con-specific elephant aggression**

Elephants in the wild live in social groups with a dominance hierarchy established by vocalizations, body posture, sparring, or even outright fights between the elephants. An elephant lower in the dominance hierarchy may be disciplined by another elephant by being pushed, butted, tusked, hit with the trunk, or body slammed. These body slams can lift an eight or ten thousand pound elephant off the ground. For these reasons, **we will not risk human life in an attempt to stop fighting elephants**. Operant conditioning provides a mechanism that can be used to reinforce an animal's positive attitude. Behavior modification techniques can also be used to reinforce positive social interactions between working members within the herd. Operant conditioning provides opportunities for safe and positive means to mitigate herd dynamics.

The primary strategy in redirection of aggression is to identify where and when it is most likely to occur and then work to develop strategies and means to prevent the aggression from occurring. Competence in these areas can only be achieved through experience and close observation of the animals in your care.

Sample strategies:

- Reinforce cooperative feeding and positive interactions between elephants
- During winter months, review camera tapes periodically during the day during the day while animals are inside to monitor elephants attitudes, and separate animals when Emily is acting restless, before aggression occurs
- Make sure Emily sees you at least once an hour, so she knows she is being watched

## Section IV: Elephant Training

### Elephant Handling Tools

**Guide-** a guide or elephant hook must be carried by all qualified handlers at all times when working with or around the elephants. It may be used in conjunction with a verbal cue, to physically cue an elephant for a desired behavior.

**Chains-** Front leg bracelet chains may be used to temporarily separate the elephants for medical procedures. The chains may be used to prevent injury from intra-specific aggression, monitor individual food consumption, and assess animal health (urine and fecal output). All chains, clevises and locks are inspected when chains are used.

### Training Procedures

The elephants are trained for a variety of reasons: mental and physical stimulation, basic maintenance for animal health, well being, and for medical procedures. The Buttonwood Park Zoo maintains a free contact program where keeper and elephant share the same unrestricted space. We utilize operant conditioning techniques including positive reinforcement as well as some of the principles of the reward/discipline system traditionally used by elephant handlers over the years. Also utilized are techniques taught in AZA's Principles of Elephant Management School.

Our elephants are trained to respond to verbal cues. For each verbal cue there is an appropriate area on the elephant's body that the handler may use to give the elephant a physical cue. These cue points, when used by the handler, along with handler's body position and verbal cue, instruct the elephant as to which behavior to perform. Positive reinforcement, which may be in the form of verbal praise, tactile reinforcement (a pat or stroke) or a food reward, is given when the behavior is completed correctly. For the training of new behaviors, food rewards are given more frequently than for known behaviors. After the animal has learned the behavior, reward frequency diminishes, but some type of positive reinforcement (a kind word e.g., "good girl" or a friendly pat) is appropriate. At the end of public demonstrations, a treat bucket (8-10 pieces of produce) is given. Handlers must be mindful that the elephants need encouragement and affection; kind words and friendly pats are an accepted form of positive reinforcement.

Along with positive reinforcement, there are occasions where the elephants require discipline. This institution views discipline as a training tool to be utilized only when there is a safety issue and an unacceptable behavior (i.e. aggression) must be corrected. Just as **inappropriate** aggressive elephant behavior will not be tolerated, **unwarranted discipline by keepers will not be tolerated**. When a handler applies discipline, it must always be a **controlled** procedure.

The Buttonwood Park Zoo does not allow the following training tools/techniques to be used:

1. Insertion of any implement into any body orifice, unless directed by a veterinarian in connection with training for a medical procedure.
2. Striking an elephant with anything more substantial than a guide.
3. Striking an elephant with any sharp object, including the hook end of a guide.
4. Striking an elephant on or around any sensitive area, such as the eyes, mouth, ears, or genital region.
5. No tools used in training may be applied repeatedly and with such force that physical harm results.
6. Withholding food or water (unless as directed for veterinary care).
7. Withholding veterinary care.

### **Training Techniques**

**Always remember that each elephant is unique with an individual personality.**

- ✓ Handlers must be consistent using established verbal cues and cue points while handling and training the elephants. (See Cue List) Training consistency is required by the Elephant Management Policy
- ✓ Any new behaviors or changes in the training routine must be approved by the Elephant Manager and if needed, the EMC.
- ✓ Verbal cues should be given in a clear calm tone without the use of the guide. (Elephants have excellent hearing; there is no need to yell.) Always give the elephant a chance to respond.
- ✓ If the elephant does not respond correctly, repeat the verbal cue in a calm, clear voice and using the guide, give a physical cue, using the appropriate cue point.
- ✓ When physically cueing the elephant be sure to use the hooked end of the guide quickly and release. (Hooking should not be applied with such force that it causes any physical harm to the animal; i.e. breaking of the skin, bleeding, bruising etc.)

**Note:** If the elephant is refusing the verbal cue, be sure there is not a medical problem that causes refusal. Never ask for a behavior that an elephant is unwilling or unable to perform due to physical disability.

- ✓ If a healthy elephant continues to refuse, issue cues for some other basic learned behaviors and then try the refused cue again in a more forceful tone. For the safety and well being of both the handler and the animal, compliance to any cue issued for a known behavior is required. If the animal continues to refuse, the handler may move the elephant off exhibit or to another area on exhibit to reduce

distractions and should continue working with the elephant or give the animal a time out. Training should continue until compliance is gained. Once the animal complies, it is also important that the interaction between keeper and animal end on a positive note (with ample reward).

- ✓ This Buttonwood Park Zoo Elephant Management Committee recognizes that in a free contact situation, there may be rare times when disciplining an elephant is necessary. Physical discipline (striking an elephant with the guide) is acceptable to correct an incident of aggression by an elephant toward a human, to correct an incident of intra-specific aggression while a member of the elephant staff is sharing the same physical space as the elephants (i.e. in the exhibit or holding area) and when for safety reasons, an unacceptable behavior must be corrected immediately. Under these circumstances the animal should be disciplined immediately by forcefully striking the elephant with the guide a maximum of 2-3 times in an appropriate non-injurious area. Appropriate areas are the lower jaw (mandibles), the hocks, rump, or lower legs above the foot. Striking must be accomplished with the handle end of the guide. The guide must be reversed in the keeper's hand so there is no possibility of a hook injuring the elephant. Striking should be accompanied by stern, emphatic vocal deterrents such as "NO". Keepers should be sure that their demeanor and voice indicate to the elephant clearly that their behavior is wrong and will not be tolerated. Keepers must regard self-control as the key element in this situation.

Immediately following physical discipline the elephant should be cued to perform a short series of learned behaviors such as "down", "get around", "head down", "brace", "foot", etc. A customary reward should be given to the elephant after successful completion of these behaviors. At no time should any form of behavior correction be prolonged. The normal working relationship and positive bond between keeper and elephant should be re-established and continued as quickly as possible.

In **all** cases where there is an act of aggression toward a keeper resulting in physical discipline of an elephant, an incident report **must** be filed, regardless of whether any injury has occurred.

## Verbal Cue List for Learned Behaviors

1. MOVE UP	Walk straight forward
2. BACK UP	Walk straight back
3. GET OVER	Move away from the handler, or go right
4. COME HERE	Turn left, or come to the handler from a distance
5. GET AROUND	Turn in a circle to the right
6. WALTZ	Turn in a circle to the left
7. GO PLAY	Animal is dismissed
8. STAY HERE	Animal remains within designated area
9. TAIL UP	Elephant holds the tail of the elephant in front
10. COME IN LINE	Elephant faces the trainer directly, lining up to the handler's shoulder
11. TRUNK	Curl trunk
12. FOOT	Raise foot
13. SALUTE	Curl trunk and raise left front foot
14. TAKE A BOW	Stretch right front leg and kneel on left knee
15. STRETCH	Sternal recumbancy
16. DOWN	Lay on side at which handler is standing
17. SIT UP	Ground sit up
18. STAND UP	Hind leg stand
19. ON YOUR HEAD	Head down and back legs straight
20. TAKE IT	Pick up an object
21. PUSH IT	Push object
22. KICK IT	Kick object
23. CROSS YOUR LEGS	Cross legs
24. HEAD DOWN	Head lowered, elbow of front leg on side of handler touching ground
25. EAR	Raise ear
26. SPEAK	Vocalize
27. EASY	Slow the animal down
28. STEADY	Hold any behavior, stop
29. NO OR QUIT IT	Stop an unwanted behavior
30. ALRIGHT	Releases all behavior
31. BRACE	Lift front foot and opposite rear foot
32. BLOW	Blow through trunk
33. UP TUB	Place front feet on performance stand
34. KNEEL	Kneel on front knees
35. PAINT	Stroke paintbrush across canvas
36. DIP IT	Dip paintbrush into paint.
37. FLIP	Animal changes side it is laying on
38. GIVE IT TO ME	Give object to the handler
39. DO IT	Defecate
40. BIG MOUTH	Open mouth wide
41. GET THE DOOR	Close the barn door
42. LIFT YOUR TAIL	Lift tail out of way during bath
43. PAD	Present pad of foot

## **Section V: Elephant Care Procedures**

### **Housing**

The elephant's indoor quarters are made up of a large (40' x 20') stall at the south end of the barn. The stall can be divided to create two 20' x 20' stalls to accommodate the isolation of an elephant if necessary. Each night one elephant occupies the large stall and the other has access to the remainder of the barn (40' x 31'). The elephants may be rotated nightly so each has equal access to all areas in the barn.

### **Medical Management**

The Buttonwood Park Zoo employs a full time veterinarian who is available at all times to deal with routine elephant health evaluations, treatment and medical emergencies. Each elephant receives a comprehensive physical and TB test annually (see Veterinary Medicine Program). Fecal examinations for parasites are conducted twice yearly or as needed. Body weight and diet for each elephant is assessed and recorded at least annually.

The elephants are trained to permit a complete body exam (including feet, eyes, ears, open mouth and tongue, teeth and tusks). Both elephants are visually inspected on a daily basis. Skin is inspected and cared for through bathing, removal of dead skin, and treatment of any other problems. Feet are also inspected and cleaned daily, all debris is removed and areas requiring further attention are identified (See Appendix I. Foot Care).

Daily observations of food intake, urine and fecal condition and output, administration of any medications, and behavior are noted in the Elephant Keeper Log.

The elephants are trained to accept injections, oral medications, and insertion of leg and ear catheters, treatment of wounds, enemas and urogenital examinations. They are also trained to accept routine collection of blood, urine, feces, and saliva. Since our elephants are beyond breeding age (8-35), we do not regularly conduct reproductive assessments of the animals, nor do we collect blood for hormonal assessment on a regular basis.

For necropsy and other health screening protocols see Buttonwood Park Zoo Veterinary Medicine Program.

### **Foot Care Protocol**

Proper foot care is considered an integral part of the preventive medical program for the elephants at the Buttonwood Park Zoo. Regular pedicures are the most important part of foot husbandry for the elephants. Routine foot care is performed by qualified elephant keepers under the supervision of the Elephant Manager in consultation with the Veterinarian



In order to maintain healthy feet and exercise all the joints, tendons and ligaments of the legs, the elephants are walked: either during public demonstrations or as part of their enrichment program.

When the elephants are walked outside of their exhibit they are encouraged to dig in the dirt and mud in order to help clean between their nails and around their cuticles. In the exhibit, sand is used as a substrate to provide additional opportunity for the elephants to dig and rub.

Daily baths include inspecting and scrubbing the feet and legs to remove feces, urine and any debris adhering to the feet pads, nails or cuticles.

Diet is monitored to prevent obesity and food is offered in a variety of areas within the exhibit to encourage the elephants to move about throughout the day.

Pedicures are provided a minimum of every two weeks. Foot care sessions consist of cuticle trimming, nail trimming and filing, pad trimming, beveling of cracks and any corrective measures needed for proper use of the foot.

The nails are shaped in such a way as to provide a finger's width between the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> nail on the front feet, and between the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> nails on the rear feet. Cuticles are kept trimmed back to prevent feathering or fluid pockets. Pads are trimmed as needed, fissures opened and beveled to prevent debris from becoming lodged in the cracks. Irregularities such as cracks and divots are corrected over the course of a number of pedicures.

The tools used in routine foot care include regular and Swiss hoof knives, rasps, files and hoof picks. Koppertox or vinegar soaks are routinely applied at the end of a foot care session.

## **Enrichment**

Environmental and behavioral enrichment are considered an important part of daily husbandry for the elephants. Training and exercise provides mental and physical stimulation to the elephants and is an excellent way to maintain the positive relationship between the animal and the handler. Additional enrichment options for the elephants such as special food items, activities and toys are also utilized. For further information on enrichment for the elephants see the Buttonwood Park Zoo Enrichment Policy and Notebook.

## **Exercise**

Physical stimulation for the elephants is important for both physical and mental health. Daily demonstrations include physical activities. To promote cardiovascular health, the elephants may be walked.

## *Elephant Exercise Program*

### Daily

15 minute walk, utilizing entire exhibit area, AM and PM

20 minute training demonstration

0.2 “tail-up” walk around exhibit

brace

down

sit up

front leg stand

rear leg stand

salute

bow

up tub

turn up tub

brace on tub

dance on tub

sit up on tub

get around

waltz

kick ball around exhibit

push large logs

take and carry logs

take and carry tire

take and carry ball

pull large logs in harness

Daily demonstration may contain all or any combination of the above learned behaviors.

## Section VI: Emergency Protocols for Elephants

### Elephant Separation Protocol

In the event there is a need to separate the elephants, the elephant barn is comprised of an indoor holding area of 2,258 square feet, divided by a cable barrier, creating a large stall of 810 square feet, at the south end of the barn, that can be further divided into two stalls, one of 400 square feet and another of 410 square feet.

Below is a list of situations that may require separation during daily elephant care. Any situations outside of the items listed below will need to be discussed with the elephant manager and/or Director before implementation. A report outlining the situation will be presented during the next elephant management meeting.

- When elephants are to be offered their main grain diet either separated in the stall or isolated in separate stalls.
- Overly aggressive elephants to one another.
  - Elephants can be separated from the herd for no more than 20 minutes.
  - Elephant moved to a stall with only visual contact. No physical.
  - When elephant is returned to the herd, elephant must be watched for further signs and for signs of reconciliation between elephants.  
**Very Important!!**
  - **Two persons present for transfers**
- During training (Optional)
- During husbandry procedures such as: foot work, bathing, tusk trims, etc... (At the Elephant Manager's Discretion)
- During routine medical procedures (Optional)

#### *Methods:*

- One elephant is placed in outside holding pen without any physical contact with other elephant, but has visual contact.
- One elephant is placed in inside holding stall and given restricted contact with other elephant.
- One elephant is placed in inside holding stall, and the other elephant chained in larger indoor space, to allow visual contact but no physical contact.

If elephants have to be separated because of aggression, remember **human safety comes first**. You can try verbal deterrents (saying “no”), calling one or the other elephant over to the side of the exhibit, etc. Positively reinforce the elephant for an appropriate response. Use your best judgment under these circumstances. **Under no circumstances should a keeper enter the same area as an elephant during an aggressive encounter.**

## **Elephant Introductions**

We will not be introducing new elephants into our herd until or unless we extensively revise our current elephant facility. The policy for introductions will be produced at that time.

## **Evacuation of a person from an elephant enclosure**

Upon discovering that a person is in the elephant exhibit or pool, the following procedures will be followed as quickly as possible.

The **person who makes the discovery** will:

1. Notify elephant keepers directly and/or by radio
2. Notify Unit C by radio

The first elephant keeper to arrive at the scene will:

1. Instruct the person in the exhibit to stay where they are and call the elephants over to the side of the exhibit as the situation warrants.

Once additional elephant staff arrive, they will guide the person out of the exhibit or if medical attention is required, shift the elephants off exhibit and wait for medical help to arrive.

Unit C will direct other zoo personnel as needed for crowd control and escorting emergency personnel to the site.

## **Elephant Down Procedure (Elephant unable to arise without assistance)**

Rapid response is critical in the event of a downed elephant. The longer the elephant is down, the less likely the elephant will be able to stand. Staff safety will be the number one priority when responding to a downed elephant.

The zoo staff member discovering the downed elephant will immediately notify one of the elephant care staff, who will in turn notify the remainder of the elephant care staff, Unit C and the veterinary staff.

The Zoo Director, Elephant Manager and/or Curator will coordinate with the veterinary and elephant care staff to determine the course of action. It may be possible for the other elephant to assist in raising the downed elephant. The Zoo Director, Elephant Manager and/or Curator will make the determination if this is to be tried.

If needed, N.C. Hudon, Inc. (contact person Dennis Hudon, phone #s 508.998.3411 office, [REDACTED] cell 1, [REDACTED] cell 2, [REDACTED] home) has offered to supply a crane and strapping to temporarily raise the elephant to a standing position. This crane can reach an elephant anywhere in the yard or barn. Ronald Labelle from the City's

Department of Public Infrastructure (phone 508.979.1520) has stated that he can have a crew and materials at the zoo within an hour in the unlikely event that a short-term structure to support the elephant for further medical care is deemed necessary.

### **Elephant Medical Emergency Response**

In the event of a medical emergency, the veterinarian will be contacted immediately. If necessary, the elephant staff will work with the vet tech to carry out veterinary instructions until the vet arrives. In the event of an incident where the prognosis for recovery is poor, the Zoo Director, Elephant Manager, or Curator will initiate our Elephant Phase-Out Plan (Section VIII)

### **Elephant Death**

If an elephant is found dead, or dies while under medical care, the The Zoo Director, Elephant Manager, Administrative Specialist and Veterinarian should *all* be contacted. They, in turn, will contact Ronald Labelle (phone 508.979.1520) to remove the dead elephant to either the City landfill (in case of good weather), or to the New Bedford Airport (in inclement weather), where the necropsy will be performed. At the New Bedford airport the following companies have agreed to let us use their hangers for a necropsy:

- North East Air - contact person: Tom Steidinger – 508.996.1832
- Colonial Air – contact person: Dot Cunningham – 508.997.0620

Before the body is removed the surviving elephant should be allowed ample time to inspect the remains of the deceased.

The Zoo Director, Elephant Manager, or Curator will then initiate our Elephant Phase-Out Plan (see Section VIII)

It is inevitable that an elephant death will attract media attention. Refer to section VII on how to handle the media.

### **Elephant Escape**

- Handler is expected to initiate the BPZ Animal Escape Protocol :
- Only approved elephant personnel should approach the elephants.
- Back-up handlers should attempt to protect fellow handlers without placing themselves in danger.

### **Accident (Keeper Injury) or Attack**

Handler is expected to initiate the Animal Inflicted Injury Protocol:

## **Section VII: Public Relations**

The Buttonwood Park Zoo is dedicated to elephant conservation. Demonstrations for the public are part of our conservation education program. We give demonstrations that highlight the strength, agility and intelligence of our elephants to increase public empathy for the species. Our goal is to educate the public regarding elephants in captivity and increase awareness of the plight of their wild counterparts. While people watch our elephants working and performing a variety of behaviors, they are being both entertained and educated. As representatives of the Buttonwood Park Zoo, keepers are an integral part of this highly visible program. The public is watching the elephants and their handlers.

A friendly and polite attitude is always encouraging to the public; this usually makes people more captivated by the handlers and their elephants. All questions should be answered enthusiastically, even the one asked a hundred times a day. While working with the elephants, the handler should not appear bored or angry. Physical cueing if necessary, should be done in a calm controlled manner. Handlers should be positive, informative and upbeat at all times in front of the public to ensure they have an enjoyable and educational experience. Public appreciation of our individual elephants will translate into support for the conservation of elephants in the wild.

### **Public Access to the Elephants**

1. Visitors must remain on the public side of the fence.
2. When walking elephants through public areas, the animals must be under the complete control of the handlers, and there must be an appropriate number of staff to ensure public safety (2 qualified elephant keepers and as many staff as needed for crowd control)
3. The public is not permitted to feed the elephants unless it is part of a planned/approved program.

## **Section VIII: Elephant Phase-Out Plan**

During our upcoming Master Planning process we will be evaluating the potential for keeping elephants in our collection long-term. Currently, if one of our elephants dies, or is in imminent danger of death, our plan is to proceed as follows:

- Either the Zoo Director, Elephant Manager, or Curator inform the Elephant SSP of the situation
  - our SSP liaison is Dale Leeds [REDACTED]
  - if Dale Leeds is unavailable contact the Elephant SSP Chair, Martha Fischer [REDACTED]
- If the surviving elephant is Ruth
  - arrange with the SSP to place her at a suitable institution. Ruth should have little problem integrating with another herd
- If the surviving elephant is Emily
  - remind the SSP that Emily is not well socialized with other elephants, and has had problems integrating into herds in the past (e.g in Baton Rouge)
  - work with the SSP to find a facility capable of handling difficult introductions
  - convey our willingness to keep holding Emily if an institution cannot be found that is capable of taking her, or if an introduction does not succeed.

## Section IX: Elephant Profiles

### Asian Elephant Elephas maximus

**House Name:** Emily

**Buttonwood Park Zoo Accession #:** 4

**Studbook Number:**

**Date of Birth:** estimated 1964

**Sex:** Female

**Weight:** 8900 lb.

**Diet:** Daily- Hay- Free choice

Mazuri Elephant Supplement

Produce- 13-15lb

Glycoflex

#### *Collection History:*

Birth Place was reportedly Thailand. She was acquired in April of 1968 from Southwicks and housed alone at the Buttonwood Park Zoo until November of 1983. In 1983 she was relocated to Baton Rouge Zoo until July of 1985 when she was returned to the BPZ and has remained until present. A second elephant "Ruth" was acquired in 1986 as a companion.

#### *Physical Characteristics:*

Emily has tusks which require periodic trimming/filing.

#### *Medical History:*

Overall, this animal is in good health. She is a solid and powerful animal. She chooses to lie down only on her left side and as a result has a chronic hip sore. Due to the mechanical causative agents, the sore is extremely resistant to treatment. The barn floor is covered with rubber matting and sand piles are provided on exhibit and have been tried in her indoor stall with little effect. The current treatment includes application of a whipped mineral oil gel to keep the area soft along with periodic treatment as needed with SSD cream to prevent infection. This animal is TB negative.

#### *Behavior/Training History:*

Emily is a dominant and strong willed animal. Patience and persistence in addition to comprehensive training plans are required as physical dominance or discipline has little effect. When scared or nervous, Emily will look to her handler for reassurance. This elephant does not interact well with other dominant cows. She either does not recognize or chooses not to exhibit appropriate behavioral responses in a herd setting.



Displacement of the subordinate elephant and handlers has been observed when Emily becomes “frustrated”. Easily bored, she requires a lot of behavioral and environmental enrichment.

Positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise, physical contact and food rewards go a long way with Emily. Tone of voice and physical cueing are also invaluable tools during training. Emily responds better to a firm tone of voice than to repeated physical cueing.

Overall, she is an affectionate animal, very vocal and tactile, willing to work and eager to cooperate with the handlers.

#### *Incident Reports*

None for the last five years

*Asian Elephant*  
**Elephas maximus**

**House Name: Ruth**

**Buttonwood Park Zoo Accession #: 5**

**House Name: Ruth**

**Date of Birth:** estimated 1958

**Sex:** Female

**Weight:** 7600 lb.

**Studbook Number:**

**Diet:** Daily- Hay- free choice

Mazuri Elephant Supplement

Produce 13-15lb

Glycoflex

*Collection History:*

Collected from the wild- unknown location. This elephant was owned by Benson's Wild Animal Farm. She was sold to a private owner in 1978 and subsequently confiscated by the Animal Rescue League of Boston and USDI, and placed at the Buttonwood Park Zoo in 1986.

*Physical Characteristics:*

Compared to Emily, Ruth is much smaller in size and much quicker in her movements than Emily. Ruth also has small peg-like tusches not visible above the lip line.

*Medical History:*

Overall, this animal is in good health. She has a partial paralysis in her trunk (pre-dating placement here) and is unable able to lift the distal portion or curl the trunk in a forward position. She compensates and has adapted to eating and drinking well. In 1998 she suffered a corneal stromal abscess in the right eye, leaving a visible scar on the cornea of the eye. There is no noticeable visual impairment from the scar. She is TB negative.

*Behavior/Training History:*

The subordinate of the two elephants, Ruth is strong willed but herd dependent. She is intelligent, innovative and emotional. Particularly affectionate with handlers, she can also be deceptively coy. She will challenge authority if boundaries have not been clearly defined by the handler. When she first arrived, this elephant was in poor physical, mental and emotional condition. She was nervous, very distrustful and a "striker". Patience and repetition are essential during training. When confused or unsure, Ruth becomes nervous and agitated and will search for the response a trainer is looking for, by performing variety of known behaviors consecutively. "Time Out's" work extremely well, as does tone of voice. Ruth is very food motivated and also responds well to tactile praise and gentle

reassurance. When focused on the task at hand, she will work with speed and efficiency. Overall, she is eager to cooperate and highly motivated.

#### *Incident Reports*

See attached Incident Reports for 10/9/10, 5/31/11, 9/28/11 and 8/9/12

**Buttonwood Park Zoo  
Elephant Incident Report**

**Date of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Keeper Filing Report:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Time of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Elephant Involved:** Emily ☐ Ruth ☐

**Keepers Involved (or present during the incident)**

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**Description of the Incident**

**What were you and/or the elephant doing at the time of the incident?**

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**In detail, describe what happened.**

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**What action if any was taken to discipline the elephant?**

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**Were there any injuries sustained?** Yes ☐ No ☐

**If yes, please describe:**

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**Date Reported:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Director** \_\_\_\_\_ **Staff Veterinarian** \_\_\_\_\_ **Elephant Manager** \_\_\_\_\_

(A copy of this report must be filed with the EMC)

## References

AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care, March 2001

Crandall, L.: Management of Wild Mammals in Captivity. 1964

Fowler, ME. *In* Fowler ME (ed): Zoo and Wild Animal Medicine, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Philadelphia, Schmidt, M. pp. 709-752, 1978

Mikota, SK, Sargent EL, Ranglack GS: Medical management of the elephant. West Bloomfield, Michigan, Indira Publishing House, 1994

Pryor, Karen: Don't Shoot the Dog

Rosamond Gifford Zoo Elephant Management Protocol, 2002

