

Supporting Elephant Health and Care in Asia

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Asian Elephant Support (AES) is a registered U.S. non-profit foundation dedicated to the care and conservation of elephants in Asian range countries, and to the people whose lives are intertwined with this magnificent and endangered species. With a large number of captive elephants (Fig. 1), time and resources must be devoted to this population while also protecting their wild counterparts and preserving elephant habitat.

The AES logo is meant to symbolize mankind's long association with the elephant in Asian range countries, and our role in their future. The decorations on the elephant head represent a ceremonial headdress or painting, indicating the cultural connection and reverence humans have for elephants. Human hands wrap around the elephant head signifying that the future of the elephant is in our hands. AES is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and guided by international elephant advisors to help achieve the goals and fulfil its mission to:

- Provide financial support for elephant projects in Asian range countries that meet our criteria for care of captive elephants and for conservation of the species
- Increase awareness of the needs and future of the Asian elephant
- Increase awareness of the humane treatment of elephants living in captivity
- Provide educational opportunities to those persons who care for captive elephants in Asian range countries.

AES partners with local and international organizations to achieve the universal goal of helping Asian elephants. Ongoing projects supported by AES include the following programs:

- A study of emerging diseases and the impact of these diseases for long-term elephant conservation in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve in Southern India. This project is evaluating the health-related aspects of the elephant population, assessing the presence of infectious and non-infectious diseases and their dynamics in the elephant population, and identifying risk factors and possible solutions to mitigate the potential impact of these diseases.
- Providing ongoing veterinary training in elephant medical care and conservation. As part of this program, a Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop was held in Banda Aceh (Sumatra) in March 2012 in collaboration with the Veterinary Society for Sumatran Wildlife Conservation (Vesswic) and the Syiah Kuala University Veterinary College in Sumatra, with support from the USFWS Asian Elephant Conservation Fund, International Elephant Foundation and Singapore Wildlife Reserves. During this workshop elephant veterinarians from around Asia gathered to discuss preventive practices, treatments, diseases, and other veterinary



Figure 1. Morning bath (Thailand).

topics affecting both wild and captive elephant populations.

- Sponsoring local elephant health care clinics. The first such clinic was held in Ahmedabad, India, on December 25th, 2011. The workshop was held at the Jagannath Temple and was attended by veterinarians from several different cities. The lectures covered topics such as elephant biology, techniques of drug administration, anaesthesia protocols, commonly occurring diseases and their management, foot care, and musth management. There were hands-on demonstrations of healthcare techniques including routine examinations, sites for injections, estimations of height and weight, and routine foot care. Another clinic was held in Assam, India, and provided an opportunity to check the health of a number of privately owned elephants, assist with deworming and vaccinations, and donate supplies for the mahouts. Since the initial clinic, there have been two follow up visits including a surgery on an elephant with an abscess.
- Providing health care supplies and technology to veterinarians caring for elephants in Asia. In Laos PDR, equipment was donated to a mobile clinic to assist during emergency calls that often involve musth bull elephants that have become uncontrollable. Portable scales were donated to elephant camps in Sumatra to help determine health status and proper dosages for medication. Health supplies, such as de-wormer and vaccinations were donated to organizations in Indonesia and India to help support the overall health of the elephants.
- Supporting immediate and emergency needs such as supplemental feeding supplies for an orphan elephant calf found by the Seblat elephant camp in Sumatra (Fig. 2). Emergency relief funds supported the Royal Kraal in Ayutthaya, Thailand, after severe flooding damaged the elephant camp, thereby hindering the staff's ability to properly care for their elephants.

- Providing support to maintain the Conservation Response Units (CRU) in Way Kambas National Park in Sumatra, until long term funding was established. These patrols, which utilize camp elephants, not only help protect wild Sumatran elephants and other endangered species, but also build community awareness and local support to preserve the forests.
- Educating the next generation of decision makers by supporting an after school program in Thailand that teaches elephant conservation issues and the role children play in the future of elephants in Asia. AES believes that one of the most valuable resources in animal welfare and conservation is knowledge. Sharing knowledge and experience builds capacity in local communities.
- Helping individuals in Asia in their quest to gain valuable knowledge and benefit the elephants in their care by supporting individual Asian veterinarians to attend various symposia, and through support for an Indonesian Forest Department employee who is pursuing a graduate degree in elephant conservation.

AES is a small organization that fills a niche in the Asian elephant conservation community to assist both captive and wild populations. AES looks forward to future collaborations to help the Asian elephant make its long and difficult trek into the next century.



Figure 2. Orphan calf (Sumatra).