

Second Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Zaw Min Oo^{1*}, Ye Htut Aung² and Wan Tun¹

¹Myanma Timber Enterprise, Yangon, Myanmar

²University of Veterinary Science, Yezin, Myanmar

*Corresponding author's e-mail: zawminoomte@gmail.com

From March 7 through March 11, 2014, veterinarians from around Asia with field experience in elephant health and medicine participated in the Second Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop held in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar.

This Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop was hosted by the University of Veterinary Science, Yezin, in collaboration with the Myanma Timber Enterprise (MTE) from the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. The Workshop was supported by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Asian Elephant Conservation Fund in collaboration with Asian Elephant Support.

By providing practical training and enabling veterinarians in Asia to share experiences regionally, the Second Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop continued the efforts of the first such workshop which was hosted in Aceh, Sumatra-Indonesia, in March 2012. These Workshops build local and regional capacity in elephant veterinary care, which enhances veterinary expertise needed for effective elephant conservation in Asia. The Second Regional Workshop hosted representatives from several Asian elephant range countries including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, as well as veterinarians from the United States and Singapore.

The Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop addressed veterinary topics such as general elephant health, diagnosis and treatment of diseases, and proper sample collection. During the Workshop, participants from each range country made presentations about regional and

local elephant health issues, scientific studies, and elephant management plans. An important topic of discussion, which was also included in several presentations, is the significant role and value of captive elephants and mahouts. Discussions also emphasized the need for comprehensive post mortems, as well as the need to address veterinary issues at the interface of wild and captive elephant populations.

Additionally, part of the Workshop was spent in hands-on practical sessions on the topics of wildlife immobilization and laboratory protocols. The wildlife immobilization component allowed participants to become better informed about the operation and handling of various darting equipment (Fig. 1). During the laboratory session, the elephant endotheliotropic herpes virus (EEHV) was confirmed for the first time to be present in tissue samples from Myanmar elephants.

The Workshop included visits to several different local elephant facilities. Participants visited the Nay Pyi Taw Zoo with its large group of 12 elephants (3 males, 8 females and 1 baby born on site), and were fortunate to see the 5 (1 male and 4 females) sacred white elephants in their special pavilion at the Uppatassanti Pagoda.



Figure 1. Demonstration of darting equipment.



Figure 2. Elephant care at MTE Pinloun elephant timber camp.

Another site visit was to the MTE Pinloun elephant timber extraction camp in Taunggyi Agency, and included health assessments of the 37 elephants (15 males, 15 females and 7 calves) in this camp, as well as demonstrations of training and management (Fig. 2). This visit was a unique opportunity for participants to see the traditional use of working timber elephants in Myanmar (Fig. 3), and discuss the comprehensive veterinary program that MTE has in place for these elephants.

The recent Regional Veterinary Workshops in Indonesia and Myanmar highlight the importance of veterinary science for wild and captive elephant conservation, and for support of elephant welfare programs in Asian range countries. The Workshops have led to better communication amongst elephant veterinarians in Asia and have increased sharing of information and experiences. As a result of the networking,



Figure 3. Working elephant at the MTE Pinloun elephant timber camp.

several field course initiatives are being discussed to continue practical training opportunities for elephant veterinarians in Asia.

Acknowledgements and thanks for all of their efforts are due to the Organizing Committee of the Second Regional Asian Elephant Veterinary Workshop, to the Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, to the MTE and University staff, and to the MTE officials and mahouts of the Pinloun elephant camp.

