



Humane Solutions for Elephants in Entertainment

Guidelines for categorising elephant tourist venues for the purpose of ending the use of elephants in entertainment

Introduction

World Animal Protection's **Wildlife – Not Entertainers** campaign aims to phase out the exploitation and suffering of wild animals in tourist entertainment. The use of wild animals for tourist entertainment is one of the key drivers of the global wildlife trade which endangers species, causes immense animal suffering and fosters a wide range of social ills including organised crime and failed economies.

A key focus of the campaign is the welfare of elephants in entertainment - an issue with relevance from an economic, cultural, livelihood, welfare and conservation perspective. World Animal Protection will build on its existing work to protect elephants by globally campaigning to end the use of elephants in entertainment, especially rides and shows. The campaign acknowledges the need to facilitate the transitioning of elephant venues from worst husbandry to best possible captive conditions and seeks to work collaboratively with stakeholders, including venue owners, mahouts, the travel industry and communities to achieve this.

The use of captive elephants in tourist attractions involves unnecessary suffering and cruelty. By shifting the demand away from attractions that use elephants for entertainment purposes, towards facilities that hold elephants with their best interests at heart, travel companies can play a vital role in the phase-out of elephant exploitation and cruelty. By only supporting responsible, elephant-friendly venues, animal welfare for existing captive elephants can be respected. And by decreasing demand for elephant-entertainment elephants can be allowed to remain where they belong: in the wild.

World Animal Protection acknowledges the need for a reasonable phase-out period in order to ensure a sustainable outcome for both elephants and the people who are economically reliant upon them. This includes, where appropriate, the implementation of alternative livelihood initiatives. Given the existing suffering of elephants in low welfare venues, it is crucial that elephant venues transition to high welfare, responsible facilities as soon as possible. Below we outline World Animal Protection criteria for an elephant-friendly tourist venue that ensures the best possible welfare for captive elephants.



This document provides the internal guidelines for defining categories to be applied to any elephant venue and aims to assist elephant venues, travel companies or others in creating, promoting or choosing to offer responsible elephant experiences. Three categories are defined, taking into account various criteria regarding the provided conditions for the captive elephants, the activities offered to visitors, the sustainability of the venue, and whether a demand for new captive elephants is maintained or not.

Categories used are:

Elephant Friendly: Standards that are accepted by World Animal Protection as a best possible permanent solution for captive elephants who cannot be returned to the wild or as temporary solution for captive elephants eligible for reintroduction.

Transitional: Improved standards and leading to a demand reduction for captive elephants but needing further improvement / transition to achieve 'Elephant Friendly' standards.

Red Line: Unacceptable conditions for captive elephants and sustaining a demand for captive elephants, while perpetuating the practice of cruel taming processes to use elephants safely in direct contact with people. Immediate action needed to improve welfare of captive animals including an immediate stop to:

- the purchasing of new elephants and breeding of captive elephants if not linked to a scientifically managed conservation program for non-commercial purposes;
- all elephant riding and shows;
- 'breaking' new elephants through use of the crush.

The categories have been defined according a 3-tier scale, ranging from Red-line, over Transitional, to Elephant Friendly. It must be the overall aim of the campaign to not only phase out the use of animals for entertainment but also to prevent suffering of the existing animals throughout the time that it takes to achieve this phase out, which in the case of elephants' longevity means several decades. By monitoring the distribution of elephant venues across these categories a successful transition to best possible welfare standards will be demonstrated by a shift of venues from the Red-Line category over Transitional to Elephant Friendly.

An adaptation of these categories could also be used as a guide for tourists and tour operators of venues that we regard as acceptable to visit and promote.

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The categories are designed as a guide only. Many venues will not meet all the criteria in the one category. Although all of the criteria are vital, for ease of assessment, each criteria that is absolutely critical for leading to an ultimate phase out is being marked with (). These should be given priority when deciding on venue category when individual criteria scatter across categories for a specific venue.*



1. Criteria for Categorising Venues

	Categories		
Criteria	ELEPHANT FRIENDLY	TRANSITIONAL	RED LINE
ELEPHANT ACQUIREMENT (*)	<p>Buying, selling or renting elephants by venues bears high risks of sustaining exploitation of elephants.</p> <p>Venues must have measures in place that ensure transactions of new elephants to or from the venue do not encourage the continuation of elephant ownership for tourism purposes, e.g. confiscations, donations, alternative livelihood provision considering the complexity of elephant ownership. Any cash payments are only provided as part of an alternative livelihood initiative with the aim of preventing the procurement of a replacement elephant by the previous owner.</p>	<p>Buying, selling or renting elephants by venues bears high risks of sustaining exploitation of elephants.</p> <p>Venues must have measures in place that ensure transactions of new elephants to or from the venue do not encourage the continuation of elephant ownership for tourism purposes, e.g. confiscations, donations, alternative livelihood provision considering the complexity of elephant ownership. Any cash payments are only provided as part of an alternative livelihood initiative with the aim of preventing the procurement of a replacement elephant by the previous owner.</p>	<p>Elephants are either purchased and selling of elephants is permitted/practiced, or elephants are rented and no procedures are in place to ensure transition of the owner into an alternative livelihood not depending on elephants.</p>



TRANSPARENCY OF ORIGIN OF ELEPHANT (*)	Transparency of origin , tamperproof ID for each elephant and records available to give proof of this.	Transparency of origin and tamperproof ID for each elephant and records available to give proof of this.	No transparency of origin , unreliable or inadequate ID method, or inadequate record keeping.
CAPTIVE BREEDING (*)	No captive breeding. Gender separation or contraception used.	No captive breeding for commercial purposes or captive breeding generally discouraged by policy.	Breeding of captive elephants is practiced (that is not linked to a scientifically managed conservation program for non-commercial purposes).
ECONOMIC MODEL	Not sustaining demand for captive elephants. Not-for-profit model of operation. Self-sufficient or finances secured for at least one year with business plan in place projecting financial security for at least three years.	Not sustaining demand for captive elephants. For profit model may be used. Self-sufficient or finances secured for at least one year with business plan in place projecting financial security for at least three years. Profits are generated and managed in a way that does not contradict efforts to phase out elephant entertainment.	For profit model clearly sustaining a demand for captive elephants for commercial purposes. Heavy reliance on income from tourist entertainment for operation and care of animals. Generated profits are motivating the venue to contradict efforts to phase out elephant entertainment.
HANDLING OF ELEPHANTS	Elephants are handled humanely in all situations. Positive reinforcement is used wherever possible to manage elephants & to ensure health and safety of workers and animals. No aversive conditioning of elephants is used. The use of potential pain-inflicting tools, such as bull-hooks, is reserved only for	Elephants are handled humanely in all situations. No aversive conditioning of elephants is used. The use of potential pain-inflicting tools, such as bull-hooks, is reserved only for emergencies and if in the best interest of the animals.	Aversive conditioning of elephants is used and there is acceptance of a need to break elephants for use. Potential pain-inflicting tools, such as bull-hooks, are being used frequently.



	emergencies and if in the best interest of the animals.	Elephant handlers are provided with training in positive reinforcement techniques.	
ELEPHANT ENTERTAINMENT	No exploitative use of elephants for human entertainment such as shows, rides or inappropriate public displays.	No exploitative use of elephants for human entertainment such as shows, rides or inappropriate public displays.	Exploitative use of elephants for human entertainment such as shows, including 'painting' or other activities that require intense training.
HUMAN-ELEPHANT INTERACTION	No direct interaction between tourists and elephants. This therefore excludes activities such as elephant riding, washing or be-a-mahout courses. To adhere with these guidelines, direct interactions between non-tourists and elephants are only permitted for individuals with appropriate training or expertise that will ensure that the welfare and safety of animals and people is not compromised.	Only direct tourist-elephant interaction if voluntary by the elephant and ensuring safety of visitors and elephant. This therefore excludes activities such as elephant riding, washing or be-a-mahout courses.	Direct tourist-elephant interaction occurs with non-voluntary elephant participation (e.g. riding, washing, be-a-mahout courses).
MOBILITY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION	Wild or semi-wild conditions for elephants during the day & night , allowing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social interaction in natural social groupings. • Foraging from a range of natural vegetation. • Space for adequate movement. 	Chain-free environment or enclosure in a natural habitat (or with naturalistic characteristics) for elephants during the day (at least 10 hours). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong efforts are made for a fully enriched environment through either access to semi-wild conditions or 	Elephants are restrained by use of chains or ropes during some or all of the day and the night. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elephants are unable to socialise in natural social groupings with other elephants.



		<p>provision of environmental enrichment that stimulates natural behaviour.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability for socialisation between elephants in natural social groupings. • If restraining of elephants is absolutely necessary at night, only chains > 10m long are used, and elephants kept in an undisturbed, hygienic and natural environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No or insufficient provision of environmental enrichment.
LONG-TERM OUTLOOK	Exit strategy in place after last remaining elephants die.	Venue willing to transition to an 'Elephant Friendly' venue.	No intention to improve the conditions for the elephants.
HUSBANDRY STANDARDS	Meets acknowledged international husbandry standards for Asian or African elephants¹. This includes the need for 'protected contact' facilities, adequate diet and reliable access to high quality veterinary care.	Meets national husbandry standards for Asian or African elephants if available and otherwise national zoo standards. If neither of these are available WAZA standards should be met.	Does not meet any applicable national or international husbandry standards
EDUCATION	Where there are visitors, accurate education is provided on the animal welfare concerns of captive elephants,	Where there are visitors, accurate education is provided on the animal welfare concerns of captive elephants,	No or only basic education provided, messages about captive elephants are inaccurate or misleading.

¹ E.g. Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS)



	conservation issues, and traditional uses of elephants.	conservation issues, and traditional uses of elephants.	
OTHER WILD SPECIES	No exploitative use of any other species for entertainment , such as shows, rides or inappropriate public displays. All other animals are kept in adequate conditions.	No exploitative use of any other species for entertainment , such as shows, rides or inappropriate public displays. All other animals are kept in adequate conditions.	Other species are exploited for entertainment and / or are suffering in inadequate conditions.

2. Appendix: Further Description of Criteria

2.1. Elephant Acquirement

In both elephant-friendly and transitional venues, measures are in place that ensure transactions of elephants to or from the venue do not encourage the continuation of elephant ownership for tourism purposes. Any cash payments are only provided as part of an alternative livelihood initiative with the aim of preventing the procurement of a replacement elephant by the previous owner.

Alternative livelihood models that could be explored include enabling an elephant owner to engage in income generation that does not depend on the use of elephants, or reimbursement through community based organisations, set up in ways that ensure no demand for further captive elephants is maintained. Donations of elephants may also be acceptable, however the receiving venues should encourage the donating person or facility to not replace the elephant with a new one. Similarly, venues that rent their elephants should put sufficient safeguards in place that ensure that the elephant remains at the venue and should encourage and enable the elephant owner to plan for a future livelihood not depending on an elephant. This obviously includes ensuring that the rental payment does not lead to the owner buying another elephant.



2.2. Transparency of Origin of Elephant

In both elephant friendly as well as transitional venues the origin of each elephant and the way it was acquired must be transparent and documented. Also the venues must ensure a tamperproof identification of each elephant even if national legislation does not call for that. Micro-chipping or DNA sampling would be recommended methods to be implemented by default to ensure elephants do not 'disappear' back into the trade. At the same time, venues must keep accurate records of the identification of each of their elephants.

2.3. Captive Breeding

In elephant friendly venues captive breeding will be prevented, either through separating sexually active males and females – something that would mostly resemble natural herd structures- or through contraception. This does not apply to elephants that are being reintroduced into their natural habitat. Many welfare oriented venues argue that breeding should be permitted to produce offspring, allowing for a more natural and enriched family life for the herd. While this argument must be acknowledged, it does in our opinion not weigh up the loss of capacity to take in other adult captive elephants in need, the challenge to raise the new offspring in an adequate way without aversive conditioning, as well as the ethical argument of exposing another elephant to a life in captivity that even in best conditions will be a compromise to a life in the wild.

In transitional venues captive breeding will not be carried out for commercial purposes or will generally be discouraged by venue policy, however, not adequately prevented.

2.4. Economic Model

Elephant friendly venues will adopt a not-for-profit model, where any additional income after covering all expenses of the venue will be used to support other welfare or conservation projects protecting elephants. In transitional venues profits may be made if all other aspects of the venue ensure that these profits do not conflict with the



intention to end exploitation of captive elephants. The risk is that profits may provide incentives to keep on rescuing elephants without putting safe-guards in place that ensure these elephants are removed sustainably from the industry, e.g. through buying elephants.

Both elephant friendly as well as transitional venues are economically self-sufficient. This does not necessarily mean purely by income generated through visitors, but may also include clear and transparent budget plans or reserves for at least the next 3 years, depending on government subsidies, grant money or donations. Venues that are not economically sustainable pose the risk that all elephants will end up back in the tourism industry in case of bankruptcy.

2.5. Handling of Elephants

In elephant friendly venues elephants should only be handled through positive-reinforcement methods, disqualifying the use of bull hooks, or other tools that may lead to injury and inflicting of pain if used inappropriately, unless for emergency situations. Security for keepers must be ensured through the design of the enclosure, making any unsafe interaction with the elephant unnecessary. Only in special situations, e.g. medical treatments, transport or relocations, emergencies, may the use of other methods be required but should be applied in the most humane way to still ensure safe and successful handling in the situation. Skill training in such humane handling methods must be enabled for all elephant keepers at these venues. Transition venues may still need to rely on frequent direct interactions between keepers and elephants and thus may need to retain the use of common controlling tools. However, their use must be limited to the bare minimum and not cause any harm to the elephant. Elephants should not be aversively conditioned through these tools or any other way.

2.6. Elephant Entertainment

In both elephant friendly as well as transitional venues elephants are not used for exploitative entertainment, such as shows, rides or inappropriate displays of unnatural behaviour for visitors. Interactions with elephants must follow the guidelines given in the previous point 3.5.



2.7. Visitor-Elephant Interaction

Best practice venues do not permit any direct or close interaction between elephants and visitors. The key attraction value at these venues is observation of elephants in semi-wild conditions in a non-intrusive way. In transitional venues limited direct interaction is offered but only if elephants are participating voluntarily, e.g. approaching visitors on their own. Common activities such as washing by visitors or be-a-mahout courses are mostly not voluntary by the elephant and thus should not be included. Activities such as touching an elephant, feeding or following an elephant may be acceptable for transitional venues if the elephant at all times can decide to retreat. This criteria is primarily limited to visitor interaction. Elephants that have been used for years in captivity may benefit from some care-taking procedures by their mahout if deemed necessary, such as washing or guiding the elephant for relocations or examinations.

2.8. Elephant restraint and Social interaction

The goal is to have sanctuary-type solutions with available large areas of land, offering semi-wild conditions and ability for social interaction with other elephants; or reintroduction into the natural, wild habitat while ensuring mitigation of human-elephant conflict situations or poaching. However, these solutions are either very expensive to build and maintain or not feasible for large numbers of elephants. Thus the transitional category compromises on this point and only recommends chain-free or enclosure environments during the day, allowing for social interaction in a natural habitat. Adequate supervision of elephants by staff is essential to ensure free-roaming elephants don't damage property or cause injury. At night, elephants should be kept in ways that prevent them from roaming outside determined boundaries but still give a maximum of freedom and ability to interact socially, such as pens or, if absolutely necessary, long ropes/chains with more than 10m length. Further, the elephants must be kept on clean, dry, natural ground at night. Short chains or concrete ground are not accepted.

In elephant friendly venues elephants will be kept in semi-wild or wild conditions with free social interaction with other elephants which should provide a fully enriched environment. In transitional venues that do not have such semi-wild facilities available, adequate environmental enrichment protocols must be employed to provide sufficient stimuli to the elephant required for a high welfare standard. Social interaction between elephants will be essential for this.



2.9. Long-term Outlook

Elephant friendly venues will have a clear exit strategy that acknowledges that once captive elephants are not exploited in entertainment anymore and the last remaining elephant at the venue has passed away the venue will change its function or stop operating. Transitional venues may not have such an exit strategy but should be willing to continue improving, aiming at becoming an elephant friendly venue in time.

2.10. Husbandry Standards

It is essential that the venue fulfils best available husbandry standards for elephants, e.g. standards provided by the Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (GFAS). Elephant-friendly venues should meet such standards wherever the criteria in this document do not provide guidance. Transitional venues are required to at least fulfil national guidelines applicable to elephants - where existing. If these do not exist, then national zoo guidelines or WAZA guidelines should be met (in that order).

2.11. Education

In both elephant friendly as well as transitional venues any visitors will be educated engagingly and comprehensively on elephant welfare, elephant conservation, cultural heritage of elephant use, and the impact of the use of captive elephants for entertainment has on both conservation and welfare.

Red line venues often include inaccurate messaging to visitors about the care and training of the elephants or the lives of captive elephants in general, such as using the term 'domesticated elephant'. This can be detrimental as visitors then believe that the elephants are well cared for and may continue to support this kind of venue.

2.12. Other Wild Species

In both elephant friendly as well as transitional venues no other wild species are used for exploitative entertainment for humans or are held in conditions causing suffering to the animal.