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May 7, 2009

Deputy City Manager A.J. Rodriguez
San Antonio City Hall
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio Texas 78283

Dear Deputy City Manager Rodriguez:

The San Antonio Zoo is a non-profit organization that has a 25-year lease with the City of San Antonio. Because the public sometimes assumes that the San Antonio Zoo is city owned, you may occasionally receive phone calls, emails, or letters regarding the Zoo. As a courtesy, I am writing to enlighten you about our Asian elephant, "Lucky," a subject I am sure you've already heard about.


Enclosed in this packet is an abundance of information regarding elephants in general and "Lucky." Unfortunately, there has been an onslaught of inaccurate information about "Lucky," our 49-year-old female elephant. Because we all care passionately about her, I'd like to take this opportunity to share a few crucial, but most importantly, true facts.

"Lucky" is fortunate to have intense care provided by a professional staff with 92 years of combined experience in biology, animal husbandry, and elephant management. She has two full-time veterinarians, both of whom are experienced in exotic animal medicine and, in particular, elephant care. "Lucky" receives the best in nutrition, enrichment, medical care, and constant attention. I have the utmost confidence that "Lucky" is content, comfortable, and that she is psychologically and physiologically healthy.

We have been diligently searching for a companion for "Lucky" since the death of "Alport," our African elephant. Although it has not been an easy task, we will not give up, and we will keep you informed, as this becomes a reality. In the meantime, please rest assured that the San Antonio Zoo will continue to do what is best for all the animals in our care... **ESPECIALLY, "Lucky."** We would be delighted to introduce you to "Lucky" and take you on a tour of our elephant exhibit and elephant barn. To set an appointment for your tour, please call (210) 734-7184, ext. 1101.

Should you receive any inquiries about "Lucky," please feel free to direct them to the Zoo's Public Relations Department, Debbie Rios-Vanskike at (210) 734-7184, ext. 1043 or email at dvanskike@sazoo-aq.org

Sincerely,


Stephen McCusker
Executive Director

SONIA - LET'S DISCUSS
I'M INTERESTED
IN GOING/TAKING
KIDS.



3903 N. St. Mary's Street
San Antonio, TX 78212-3199

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AZA
AMERICAN ZOO AND AQUARIUM ASSOCIATION





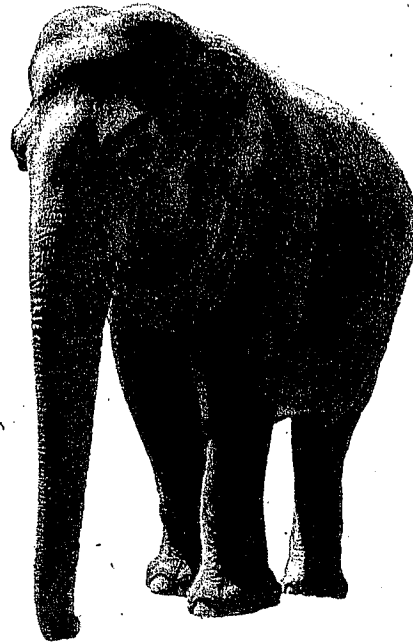
LUCKY'S PROFILE

STATS:

- Sex: Female Asian elephant
- Birth year: 1960
- Age: 49
- Zoo resident since 1962 at the age of two

Lucky's Personality:

- Easy going
- Very smart
- Very cooperative
- Socializes well with keepers, especially male keepers



Lucky's Favorite Activities:

- Likes to forage for food when she knows there are treats in her exhibit
- Enjoys cooling off and submerging herself in the pool during the summer months
- Enjoys mud and dust baths

Lucky's Health and Well-Being:

- Receives a bath everyday
- Receives a physical exam everyday that includes: eyes, ears, trunk, mouth, and feet
- Receives training and enrichment sessions every day as part of her preventive health care plan
- The pool is drained and cleaned every 3-4 days. It also has a continuous flow of fresh water which helps keep it clean



Most Frequently Asked Questions About "Lucky," The San Antonio Zoo's Asian Elephant

How old is "Lucky?"

Lucky arrived at the San Antonio Zoo in 1962 at the age of two. She is 49 years old and has lived longer than the average elephant either in the wild or in a zoo.

Is "Lucky's" habitat adequate?

Yes. "Lucky's" habitat meets the necessary requirements set forth by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). AZA accreditation standards are science-based and continue to be re-evaluated, including the mandatory standards for elephants. AZA's Standards for Elephant Management and Care allow the San Antonio Zoo to appropriately maintain these magnificent animals, and require a significant commitment of staff and resources. The San Antonio Zoo is meeting these commitments and is continuously improving its elephant program.

Does "Lucky" have a foot infection or foot problems?

"Lucky" shows no signs of foot problems. Zookeepers are trained in preventive health care methods especially in elephant foot care. Her feet are currently in excellent condition.

How is "Lucky's" overall health?

Two full-time veterinarians monitor "Lucky's" health regularly. She receives baths and is examined on a daily basis. The examinations include her eyes, ears, mouth and feet. She is also trained to assist keepers and veterinarians in providing the care she requires as part of her preventative health care plan. The veterinarians are also available around the clock to respond to any health issues that may arise. She is fit and healthy.

Is "Lucky's" pool adequate?

Yes. The water is deep enough that she can submerge herself during summer seasons. The pool also has a continuous flowing fresh water supply, which helps keep the pool clean.

How often is the pool cleaned and drained?

The pool is cleaned and drained as needed. It differs between the summer and the winter months. Algae grows quickly during the summer, so the pool is drained and cleaned every three to four days.

Will the San Antonio Zoo get another elephant? If so, when?

Yes, the San Antonio Zoo is in the process of acquiring another elephant.

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Why is it important for “Lucky” to stay at the San Antonio Zoo?

“Lucky” is well taken care of; she is healthy and receives consistent veterinary care. She knows her habitat; she is familiar with zookeepers and staff that care for her 365 days year, and regardless of all the variables, there is no question that a move from the San Antonio Zoo would be stressful

The San Antonio Zoo connects people with animals with the goal of inspiring visitors to take conservation action for animals in the wild. A recent study found that visiting accredited zoos and aquariums prompts people to feel a stronger connection to animals and to reconsider their role in conservation. This provides a benefit not only for school children and families in our community, but for conservation programs worldwide. The San Antonio Zoo and its peer institutions help support conservation and scientific research programs, supporting more than 3,700 field conservation and research projects in 100 countries. We cannot support these programs without live animals such as elephants.

How does the San Antonio Zoo help in elephant conservation?

The San Antonio Zoo has been involved in elephant conservation and research since 1997. We support or have supported the following:

- ✘ SSP Assessment of Reproductive Status in Captive Elephants in 1997
- ✘ Sumatra Elephant Fund in 1999
- ✘ Bushmeat Crisis Task Force since 2000
- ✘ Elephant Transit Home in Sri Lanka:
- ✘ One year's sponsorship of Asian orphan in 2003
- ✘ International Elephant Foundation in 2006
- ✘ National Elephant Center in 2008

Research and Studies include:

✘ **International Elephant Foundation’s EEHV Research**

Staff collects weekly blood samples from the Zoo’s Asian elephant as part of an ongoing International Elephant Foundation project to investigate the Endotheliotropic Elephant Herpes Virus (EEHV). Weekly blood collection will continue for a two-year span and will be used to create a comprehensive database of the serologic status of Asian elephants in North America. “Lucky” does not show signs of EEHV.

✘ **African Elephant Immunocontraception Study**

This trial involving African elephants in North American zoos was intended to test the SpayVac contraceptive vaccine and compare its performance to that of the conventional vaccine. An aqueous and a non-aqueous formulation of the single-dose, long-lasting vaccine was tested to provide preliminary data before using SpayVac on elephants in Africa. The Zoo’s African elephant was a participant in this study.

⌘ **Elephant TAG Investigation of Potential Use of Laparoscopy**

The San Antonio Zoo, in cooperation with the Elephant Taxon Advisory Group, which is a multi-institutional collaborative group made of experts from various accredited Zoo's, has been formed to investigate the potential use of laparoscopy in elephants. The development of laparoscopic equipment and techniques through such procedures will potentially improve the general health of captive animals and aid conservation efforts of both captive and free-ranging elephants. In the future, laparoscopy on elephants could address abdominal and thoracic diseases, reproductive procedures, bacterial and viral disease diagnosis, and visual assessment and biopsy of abdominal organs.

ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

Dear Deputy City Manager:

The Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) is writing to express strong support for the San Antonio Zoo, especially as it faces attacks from anti-zoo extremist organizations. As the independent organization with accreditation oversight of the San Antonio Zoo, AZA can assure you that this institution meets the highest standards of animal care and welfare.

AZA is the accrediting organization for 18 zoological institutions in the State of Texas. In this role, we enforce mandatory standards for animal care and welfare; professional staff training; safety for animals, staff, and visitors; conservation science and educational programs; veterinary programs; financial stability; risk management; and visitor services.

The San Antonio Zoo conducts an exemplary elephant program, run by professionally trained animal experts who provide superior care. In consideration of these facts, AZA has granted the Zoo a temporary variance from its requirement to have at least two elephants to allow the Zoo time to locate, train and transport a suitable companion animal for its existing elephant. AZA's independent Accreditation Commission is scheduled to review the progress and status of this variance at its March meeting.

The San Antonio Zoo is not only part of the AZA Elephant Taxon Advisory/Species Survival Plan Program, but also its Director, Steve McCusker is an active leader in this important effort. With almost 300 elephants, more than 3,880 years of collective elephant management experience, and an extensive network of scientific advisors covering the disciplines of nutrition, veterinary medicine, pathology, behavior, reproduction, population management, education, and research, this cooperative Program is managed by the leading experts in the advancement of the health, welfare and conservation of elephants.

By contrast, fringe groups want to deny children and families the opportunity to see and experience wild animals. These extremists do not engage in meaningful wildlife conservation or animal care programs. Moreover, they have mounted attacks on the San Antonio Zoo and other facilities across the country based on allegations that we believe are false and unfounded. These groups seek to remove elephants from zoos as part of their radical agenda to close zoos across the country. We urge you to resist being swayed by these tactics.

AZA accreditation standards are science-based and always rising, including our mandatory standards for elephants. AZA's *Standards for Elephant Management and Care* allow our members to appropriately maintain these magnificent

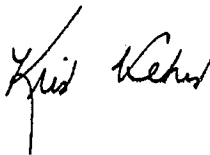
animals, and require a significant commitment of staff and resources. The San Antonio Zoo is meeting these commitments and is continuously improving its elephant program. In fact, the Zoo's plans for expanding its elephant habitat are consistent with a nationwide trend to increase our commitment to elephants. Sixty other accredited zoos have or are preparing to make these improvements.

The San Antonio Zoo connects people with animals with the goal of inspiring visitors to take conservation action for animals in the wild. A recent study found that visiting accredited zoos and aquariums prompts people to feel a stronger connection to animals and to reconsider their role in conservation. This provides a benefit not only for school children and families in your community, but for conservation programs worldwide. AZA-accredited institutions draw 175 million visitors annually, including one million people from the San Antonio Zoo community. By directly engaging the public, The San Antonio Zoo and its peer institutions help support conservation and scientific research programs, supporting more than 3,700 field conservation and research projects in 100 countries. We cannot support these programs without live animals such as elephants.

All AZA-accredited zoos and aquariums, including the San Antonio Zoo, have missions built on education and public awareness. Elephants are leading ambassadors for wildlife in these education programs – offering each visitor a special sense of wonder and appreciation of the natural world.

As elephant experts with an accreditation oversight role over the San Antonio Zoo, AZA is available to answer questions about the mandatory requirements this institution meets to earn its accreditation status, and why accreditation is important. We also again reassure Members of the City Council that the San Antonio Zoo and its programs are in compliance with high standards for animal care and welfare. Your community is fortunate to have the San Antonio Zoo, and your continuing commitment to this facility is much appreciated.

Sincerely,



Kristin L. Vehrs
Executive Director
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
8403 Colesville Road, Suite 710
Silver Spring, MD 20910
301-572-0777, ext. 229
kvehrs@aza.org

ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

Frequently Asked Questions About Elephants in AZA Zoo's

Is the San Antonio Zoo elephant care standards adequate. Yes. The San Antonio Zoo adheres to the high standards set by the Association of Zoo's & Aquariums. AZA and its members are committed to establishing research priorities, supporting research studies and continuously improving its standards. The AZA Elephant Advisory Group has developed an action plan to improve care and to expand even further the contributions of AZA zoos to elephant conservation in the wild.

The "AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care" set requirements for such things as space, safety, enclosure design, nutrition, reproduction, enrichment, and veterinary care to ensure a quality living environment for these amazing animals. They were developed in consultation with zoo elephant experts, as well as field researchers and animal welfare advocates over several years.

Why is it important for elephants to be in zoos?

According to a 2005 Harris Interactive poll, 95 percent of U.S. adults agree that visiting accredited zoos and seeing elephants and rhinos helps people appreciate them more and encourages people to learn more about them. Another finding shows that 86 percent of respondents agree that visiting zoos and aquariums encourages people to donate money or time to animal conservation efforts.

These statistics support what the San Antonio Zoo and other AZA accredited zoos have consistently heard from their guests: People want to see elephants in AZA-accredited zoos because it's how they learn about, and come to love and care for the future of these wonderful animals. This overwhelming public support of the value of zoos and aquariums completely belies the extremist views of certain groups that would deny families and children the chance to experience, learn about and care for creatures that need their understanding and help.

The poll shows that most adults (95%) agree that seeing live animals in zoos and aquariums gives children a greater appreciation for animals. Ninety-three percent of respondents agree that their families enjoy going to zoos and aquariums where they can see living animals up close.

Seeing these magnificent animals up close and learning about their habits and ecology have spurred the imagination of millions of zoo visitors, most of whom cannot afford to travel to exotic locations to view elephants in nature. Thousands may be moved to contribute to conservation, or to continue their education and become biologists working in the field.

More people visit AZA zoos and aquariums than the combined attendance of professional football, basketball, and baseball games (over 160 million each year).