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Cover Page Footnote
I thank Fred C. Logan, Theodore Svertesky, Bill "Buckles" Woodcock, and Richard "Army" Maguire, for their help with this paper.

The following pieces (a note and Part I of a paper) have been submitted independently but, because the concerns and comments complement each other, we are presenting them in succession.

NOTES ON TRAINING OF CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS

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ABSTRACT: Benefits from training captive animals are significant to the safety of both animal and human. Training programs should address two fundamental considerations: 1) increased manageability for safety in maintenance and medical care, and 2) enhancement of psychological and physiological health and possibly to provide increased resistance to disease and environmental stress. Command vocabulary should be simple, minimized, and the performance repertoire maximized within appropriate limits. Trainer and animal relationship should be based upon mutual respect and an understanding of the constraints imposed within the captive environment.

The role of training in regard to the management of animals in zoos is a subject of considerable (and frequently highly emotional) debate among professional and public organizations involved in zoo administration, regulation, and volunteer support.

The training of zoo animals is often decried as incompatible to the ideal of displaying animals whose behavior is typical of the species in its native habitat (Batten, 1976). While this ideal can be achieved with certain species, especially the smaller and highly specialized forms, these types of exhibits are in most instances prohibitively expensive in terms of both cost and spatial requirements for larger animals. Such exhibits may severely limit the display value of the animal in that only rarely may the animal be visible to public view. Unfortunately, as a rule it remains virtually impossible to provide captive environments which will allow the full expression of behavior and activity patterns characteristic of a species in its natural milieu (Hediger, 1950, 1955; Markowitz, 1982).

Exhibit design should nonetheless recognize the importance of social, spatial, and activity requirements on an individual species basis, and provide means for satisfying such biological drives within the captive environment. Training programs are one means for ameliorating the effects of limited and static captive environments.

The forms which a training program may assume range from simple habitu-

ation to human proximity through complex performance routines. Elephants, as a domesticated species, may be trained for riding and to work in harness. Elephant ride operations provide an excellent means for achieving a level of physical activity commensurate to that of the elephant in its natural environment. Elephant rides may provide a substantial source of cash income for reinvestment into animal programs.

Even elementary training provides profound benefits for wild animals in captivity; visitation by veterinary personnel can be substantially reduced or eliminated entirely with regard to routine medical care (Hediger, 1950). Enhanced manageability facilitates the performance of maintenance routines and greatly simplifies the procedures necessary for medical treatments and evaluations (Fowler, 1978; Markowitz, 1982; Schmidt, 1982). Training programs may be utilized for the reduction of pathological stress due to limited and static environments (Hediger, 1955; Batten, 1976; Lorenz, 1982; Markowitz, 1982; Schmidt and Markowitz, 1977).

The cumulative benefits of training for zoo animals are thus significant for the greater safety of both animal and human members of the zoo community. Training program design should address two fundamental considerations:

1. increased manageability for safety in maintenance and medical manipulations.

2. behavioral enrichment for enhancement of psychological and physiological health and to provide increased resistance to disease and environmental stress.

Successful implementation of training programs entails recognition of the following criteria:

a. The handling and training of elephants must be restricted to professional staff personnel or consultants.

b. Positive, emphatic and consistent reinforcement of behavior is necessary.

c. Training routines should be incorporated as an integral part of a daily program.

There are various related factors which are applicable to the preceding considerations. Training is an active process and as such requires continual reinforcement to maintain viability. Improper handling may result in a well-trained animal becoming completely unmanagable. While the fundamental principles of animal training are almost universally applicable, the techniques involved in achieving a trained behavior may vary with the individual.

The well-designed training program assesses individual physique and personality as well as species characteristics for determination of an appropriate task repertoire. Command vocabulary should be minimized and

performance repertoire maximized within appropriate limits. Given that an individual can assimilate and retain a limited number of verbal cues, overcomplication of the vocabulary employed will unnecessarily limit the potential task repertoire. Incorporation of vocal, postural, and spatial cues allow elicitation of several discrete but related behaviors using one simple verbal command, as per examples given below:

Outline of a hypothetical task repertoire for zoo elephants
(Quotation marks indicate key word for cuing behavior.)

I. Elementary task repertoire for handling and maintenance.

1. come 'here'
2. stay 'steady'
3. lie 'down'
4. get 'up'
5. move 'over'
6. move 'back'
7. 'move' ahead
8. lift 'foot'
9. raise 'trunk'

associated vocabulary: good
no
all right (i.e., O.K., as you were)

II. Integrated play behavior

1. trunk manipulation techniques
   a. pick up and hold objects
      - wave handkerchief
      - ring bell
      - give object to handler
   b. draw water into trunk, hold; spray on cue
2. dancing type maneuvers
3. ball exercises
   a. throwing or striking with trunk
   b. kicking with feet
4. group routines
   a. London bridge
   b. over the garden wall

III. Physical conditioning exercises

1. pedestal training
   a. climb onto pedestal, stand, climb down
   b. pivoting turns on pedestal
   c. pedestal sit-up
2. ground sit-up
3. hind leg stand
4. head stand
5. salute
6. ritual 'mount'
7. walking mount

Additional commands are given by Efthyvoulidis (1980).

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