

**CAROL BUCKLEY LLC
ELEPHANT WELFARE CONSULTANT**

My name is Carol Buckley. I am an expert in captive-held elephant care and recovery and have devoted the last 40 years to improving elephant welfare worldwide. My services for captive elephants, which include rescue, rehabilitation and humane training, have benefited governments and private owners internationally. In 1995 I created the first natural habitat refuge for captive-held elephants located in the United States. Fifteen years later I founded Elephant Aid International in order to focus my work on elephants in Southeast Asia.

Over the past seven years I have worked with foreign governments, NGOs and elephant owners to improve elephant facilities and update management practices. I provide expertise in transitioning trainers and their elephants from antiquated dominance-based forms of training to more humane and progressive approaches to elephant management, systems that are more suited to today's modern zoos.

I have been asked to review and evaluate videos and photos of the female elephants living at the Zoo Hanover. I've spent hours combing through raw footage and still photographs. What I observe is a consistent, outdated approach to training based on dominance and fear, and to displaying elephants in a captive situation.

The primary area of deficiency I identified is in training and management.

All the trainers/keepers are consistent, purposely using intimidation and domination in their training and behavior toward the elephants. The elephants are required to respond immediately, precisely and repeatedly when commanded by any trainer/keeper. The trainers/keepers use force unsparingly. They inflict pain for even the slightest perceived infraction. The video showed the trainers/keepers frequently and repeatedly using both hands—something I have never seen before—to embed the hook into the sensitive tissue of the top of the neck and head. It appears to be the standard response when an elephant hesitates, is not moving fast enough or is not executing a trick precisely enough for the trainer.

The trainers work together to reinforce the dominance of the primary trainer so as to prevent the rebellion or escape of an elephant. Calves often became confused and frightened and try to run away. If a calf attempts to run away during a training session, two additional trainers run at the calf, intimidating him/her back to the primary trainer. The elephant's fear-based response is met with an angered trainer using both hands and a great deal of force to stab him/her on the top of the neck with the hook, and yank his/her head down toward the ground.

The traditional bull hook or ankus and bullwhip appear to be the primary tools used to train, work, control and reprimand the elephants. One piece of footage showed a trainer standing in the exhibit talking on a cell phone when elephants were presumably free to wander at will. When a calf walked past, the trainer withdrew something from his pants pocket—I couldn't identify exactly what--and thrust it into the side of the elephant, stabbing the calf several times in fast repetition. The calf responded with a vocalization and quickly moved away from the trainer, who immediately resumed his cell phone conversation.

The type of training used by the zoo staff is called free-contact dominance (FCD). It is an antiquated form of training used primarily by circus trainers and mahouts in Asia, where elephants are confined on chains and forced into manual labor.

FCD philosophy is based on complete dominance by the trainer and utter submission by the elephant. The elephant is provided no autonomy and allowed no free choice: s/he must always be attentive to the trainer and execute his wishes immediately. Failure on the elephant's part to meet the expectations of the trainer results in immediate punishment, physical pain, harassment, intimidation and emotional stress. Over time the systematic abuse leaves the elephant in the state of *learned helplessness*, a sense of powerlessness arising from a traumatic event or persistent failure to succeed. It is thought to be one of the underlying causes of depression.

Few elephants outside of Asia are still trained in this manner. It is simply an outdated approach to training, recognized as harmful to elephants and unnecessary in a modern zoo environment. In many municipalities and countries the use of the bull hook is outlawed because of its abusive nature. Today, Protected Contact and Free Contact Non-Dominance are the accepted progressive approaches to elephant training.

Research has proven that elephants are highly intelligent and equally as sensitive. An elephant's skin is thick but sensitive, with blood flow and nerve endings close to the surface, with no protective coat. Their naked skin can be ripped, torn and punctured by insects and sharp objects, leaving them highly vulnerable to pain inflicted by bull hooks, whips and weapons. They respond by screaming, attempting to escape or submitting to a trainer's will.

Gay A. Bradshaw, Ph.D., Ph.D., a psychologist, ecologist and director of The Kerulos Center has shown that elephants exposed to physical and physiological abuse can suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Young elephants who are repeatedly

traumatized in a FCD system can suffer long-term effects, leading to physical and emotional problems later in life.

The training depicted in the photos and videos I reviewed, without exception, is for circus tricks, intended to entertain the public and reinforce a trainer's dominance over the elephant. The elephants live under a constant threat of pain and harassment. This creates a continual low-level stress that causes anxiety and fear; can trigger aggression; and has a negative impact on their immune system.

These tricks have nothing to with the training required for veterinary examinations and do not contribute to the elephants' quality of life. Elephants can be trained to receive quality veterinary care using the humane and safe systems of Protected Contact and Free Contact Non-Dominance, both of which are currently used in modern Western zoos.

Based on my decades of hands-on experience and keen understanding of captive-held elephant behavior, I believe that the elephants living at the Hanover Zoo suffer from *learned helplessness* and live in fear on a daily basis. But the unhealthy conditions described above, which result in poor elephant welfare, can be rectified with the use of progressive, proven humane approaches to elephant training and management.



Carol Buckley