

# **Tuli Elephants**

## **The World's Elephant Experts Speak Out**

### **Statement by Daphne Sheldrick, M.B.E. and Global 500 Laureate, On the Tuli Baby Elephants**

I viewed the Video showing the captive baby Elephants kidnapped from their natural families in Tuli Reserve, Botswana, and as a recognized world expert on the handling and care of elephants, I have the following statement to make:

To me, the conditions under which these orphaned elephants are kept, and the treatment to which they are being subjected, is, unacceptable from a humane angle, and therefore cruel.

1. The environment in which the little elephants are chained is, in itself, inappropriate, stressful in the extreme and therefore cruel. The noise level within the shed (metallic clanging and banging echoing loudly around the shed) is in itself stressful to the sensitive ears of a traumatized baby deep in shock and grief, having been forcibly separated from its herd and removed from the tranquility of a wild environment.

2. The calves (none I saw were over the age of 3 years, and some younger than 2), stand on wet concrete, in line, hobbled by the front legs and chained by the back legs, separated from one another, so that they cannot touch and comfort one another. The back legs are chained together and stretched backwards by chains fixed to the concrete so that the animal cannot stand in a natural and relaxed manner, and is constantly straining - again cruel and unacceptable.

3. Like the young of all animals, baby elephants need sleep, and they sleep lying down. Under natural conditions the calves, would lie down and sleep for an hour or two throughout the day, and most of the night. The captive Tuli babies are unable to lie down, so they are deprived of sleep and therefore exhausted - an age old form of torture, even within human society.

4. It would appear to me that they are also hungry, for they can be seen desperately reaching out for food that they are unable to reach, whilst a fat man struts around and gives them the odd minuscule hand-out. One little elephant drank long and thirstily direct from a hose pipe inserted directly into its mouth, indicative of great thirst. I would suspect that these babies are kept short of both food and drink - another age old form of torture, obviously in an attempt to try and force them into submissive obedience.

5. The informed can tell a world from the expression of the eyes, and as an elephant expert I can categorically say that the eyes of the captive babies indicate immense trauma, exhaustion and fear. They were unnaturally wide and staring, in some cases showing the whites, which is a definite indication of terror. In some a white discharge was visible in the corners, and we have ever only seen this in elephants that are in desperate straits. The eye sockets were showing signs of sunkenness, an indication of dehydration and starvation and the ears are constantly held in the "alarm" raised attitude, which denotes apprehension and fear.

6. Evidence of brutality is clearly visible from lesions around the head, suppurating wounds on the head, upper front legs, chain "burns" and wounds, even swelling on the back legs. The animals constantly shift weight on the back legs, rubbing one leg against the other, and this is an indication of discomfort and pain. Because of the wet concrete on which they are forced to stand, I suspect that their feet are soft and painful as well and the little elephant that was shuffling along, hobbled, beside a man walked as though on hot coals.

7. One little elephant was filmed undergoing a so-called "training" session, anchored to an adult Asiatic elephant ridden by a mahout and being controlled by a hooked implement. The baby was being dragged around in circles by a chain around its neck attached to the adult, its front legs hobbled, continually threatened by a man wielding a long stick. Every time it attempted to charge, which it did frequently, the restraining chain would be pulled and appeared to tighten around its neck and under the ears - both extremely sensitive parts of the body.

8. Buckets of water were constantly and repeatedly thrown in the baby elephant's face - again an unacceptable form of punishment that would be stressful and classified as cruel under the circumstances of being done repeatedly and without respite.

9. It would appear that the elephants are kept short of food and water, for they appeared hungry, desperately reaching out for food that they obviously could not easily reach because they were stretch-chained by the back legs. One little elephant was attempting to climb in a desperate bid for relief. Another was almost kneeling. Every now and then a fat man offered one of them a morsel no bigger than a cube. One little elephant, clearly very thirsty, drank hungrily from a pipe inserted into its mouth and downed a large quantity indicating great thirst.

I can state categorically that I saw no calves that were older than the age of three, or at the very most, four years old. At least two were less than 2 years of age and as such still milk dependent. It is very doubtful if these will survive, and they were beginning to show signs of dying - sunken eye sockets, prominent cheekbones, etc. All the babies in the shed would still be suckling their mothers, but those under the age of two, will not survive without milk.

**SUMMARY:** - I was appalled at the unacceptable cruelty this tape exposed. This cannot and should not be condoned by any civilized society. It contravenes the code of acceptable conduct in dealing with animals and reveals torture, torment and blatant cruelty.

I am aware that in 1997 the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) included the Botswana population on Appendix II with an annotation to allow the export of live elephants to "appropriate and acceptable destinations". However, this, their first destination in South Africa, is neither appropriate nor acceptable in my professional opinion.

Furthermore, I do not consider their ultimate destination where they will be exhibits for public display or used in the entertainment industry, either appropriate or acceptable. Elephants share with humans the same span of life and are highly intelligent, sensitive and sophisticated beings, with a sense of family and a sense of death and an emotional make-up akin to our own. They also

need a lot of space and no Zoo or Circus can possibly provide adequate space for an elephant, since for an elephant 100 miles is merely a little stroll.

Neither is there anything "educational" in viewing a captive elephant kept under sufferance in unnatural conditions. It is my view that captivity over a long period of time turns an elephant psychotic and dangerous, particularly when cruelty is involved to "train" them.

Regulations laid down by CITES state that the export of live specimens of Appendix II species must be in such a manner as to "minimize the risk of injury, damage to health or cruel treatment". Having viewed the videotape of the Tuli baby elephants being held in South Africa, it is clear to me that these elephants have been, and are being, subjected to unnecessary cruelty, and that their health, both physical and psychological is being impaired through torture and stress. Therefore, the Government of South Africa should not issue re-export permits for these animals since in doing so it would be violating Article IV (c) of the CITES Convention to which it is a signatory.

Finally, I consider the removal of dependent elephant calves from their family groups to be unethical, humanely unacceptable and therefore cruel.

In conclusion, I do not consider the export of the Tuli baby elephants to be in accordance with the conditions laid down by CITES regulations and as such unlawful and illegal.

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