



Christopher visit May 2019



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On behalf of the Elephant Conservation team, we would like to truly thank Asian Elephant Support for their trust and for helping us to cover the cost of Dr. Christopher Stremme's visits.

Ultrasound/ health check

We performed an ultrasound test on our female elephants to monitor the status of their reproductive structure, and to determine if we have new pregnant females. After the investigation, we compare the ultrasound results of each female with their hormone profile obtained at the ECC endocrinology laboratory to better understand which females are potentially viable for breeding.

This information is extremely useful to manage our breeding program as efficiently as possible.

Mae Khram Ohn, our elephant that is pregnant for 17-months, is in good shape and after the ultrasound test, we concluded that the calf is alive and develop normally. Unfortunately, no more pregnancies were confirmed this time.

We also performed an ultrasound test on our male elephants to assess the size of the testicles and to investigate if sperm is stored in the ampulla.

It was very interesting for the mahouts of the male elephants to assist in the procedure since most of them believed that male elephants don't have testicles as they are inside.

The situation was more critical than we thought since 2 of our 3 adult male elephants have small testicles and the accessory glands were mostly empty. It means that only one of them is viable for the breeding program. The rest of the male elephants are juveniles and sub-adults, so they are still developing their sexual organs.

In order to better understand the reproductive status of each male, the next step would be to collect semen samples and asses the quality under the microscope.

Training

Ultrasound workshop

This time, we invited veterinarians of the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO). The objective was to show them what an ultrasound test for elephants looks like. We would also like to show them that this procedure doesn't compromise the health of the elephant.

During this training, Christopher was explaining the different images observed on the screen. They were also comparing these structures with an anatomical drawing of male and female reproductive structures. After all these explanations, Kan and the PAFO veterinarians were trying to identify some reproductive structures under Christopher guidance.



Left picture: Anabel (ECC biologist) showing the reproductive structures of male and females. Right picture: Dr. Christopher explaining to the PAFO veterinarians how to perform ultrasound tests.



PAFO veterinarian hands on under Christopher's close supervision.

The level of attention and cooperation of the government veterinarians was very impressive. Kan played an extraordinary roll in translating Christopher explanations and explaining the importance of the ultrasound check for the breeding program. The PAFO veterinarians really like the training and they even come back with new member the next day.

Intravenous fluid (IV) administration workshop

Kan wanted to refresh his memory on how to insert an IV line in an elephant. Christopher performed a workshop where he explained the use and the quantities of each kind of fluid according to the elephant's health. After the theory, they were practicing how to insert the catheter. The veterinarians from the PAFO were also present during the workshop.





Christopher demonstrating how to administrate IV fluids for an elephant to Kan and the PAFO veterinarians

Drug dosage and uses workshop

Kan and Christopher worked at the pharmacy. Christopher explained to Kan the use of each drug, the dosage for elephants, the length of the treatment, and how to administrate it. They were focused on the use of antibiotics and other drugs that Kan is not using on a regular basis.

Birth protocol

After the health check of the elephants, Anabel (ECC biologist), Kan and Christopher have reviewed the birth protocol for the upcoming delivery. This protocol contains very useful information about how to manage the last months of the pregnancy, the parturition, and post-natal care. We also reviewed what kind of drugs and equipment we will need to have at the ECC in the case of an emergency or complication during the delivery.

Male and female anatomy training for the ECC staff

Christopher explained the anatomy of the reproductive tract of the females and males to clarify the size and the function of each part. He also explained the estrous cycle of the females and what hormones are involved in it. With this information in mind, Christopher clarified why it is important to do ultrasound checks on males and females and why we have to do it transrectally instead of transabdominal. He also explained what the reproductive parts look like in the ultrasound screen. The entire presentation was translated by Mr. Kan.

The veterinarians from the PAFO were also present during this workshop. They paid lot of attention during the explanation and took notes.

The visit of Christopher was another success. During his stay he did not only help the staff at the center, but also members of the local government.

