



The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

January 26, 2009

To the Los Angeles Mayor and City Council:

The LA Zoo stands to gain everything through sending Billy to a dedicated Sanctuary and halting construction of its \$42 million elephant exhibit expansion, and will lose nothing. Continuing to attempt the impossible will end in failure; it's as simple as that. The planned construction will be a sore that never heals. Halt construction, show compassion and wisdom in sending Billy to a good home, and use the money saved to keep animals the zoo can look after well, rather than ones no zoo ever has.

As the ex-Curator of an elephant-keeping zoo in England I have come to realise the problems associated with elephants in zoos are too great to be overcome by simply adding what to an elephant are mere frills - a few more acres, a bit more variety in the diet, some slightly more giving surfaces to walk on.

The scientific evidence for poor health in zoo elephants is now overwhelming. The best data is from Europe, but here we have some big, natural, grassy enclosures which dwarf the planned LA exhibit and husbandry standards which are higher than in the US - and yet European elephants are sick. The zoo environment itself is so bad for elephants that those born in zoos live shorter lives than even those that go through the horrors of capture, removal from the mother and transport half way round the world to western zoos.

I ask that the LA Zoo authorities are not taken in by those who state that the planned expansion will - somehow - address all the ills zoo elephants have to face. Compared with sub-standard zoos the new exhibit might look an improvement. But to an elephant it is still an impoverished, stifling environment which pays no more than passing respect to elephant biology. LA Zoo will still keep elephants in enclosures a fraction of the size elephants have evolved to traverse, in groups of a structure no wild elephant would ever live in.

Imagine how an elephant would design an enclosure for itself, and you might have something a little like the hundreds of acres the Tennessee Elephant Sanctuary will provide for Billy; you would certainly have nothing like the tiny exhibit expansion LA Zoo plans to build.

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