





Houston Zoo, Anita Schanberger

Above: A handler uses multiple targetpoles to position or direct an elephant. Right: A handler uses targets in a direct-contact setting.

A target can be any length and made of a number of different materials. Commonly, a bamboo pole or other lightweight material 8 to 10 feet in length is used to extend the handler's reach. Short target poles can be made of wooden sticks such as handles from rakes or brooms, or PVC pipe. On one end of the pole, a water buoy, bundle of rags or paper towels, or other such object is permanently fixed. Because the target can be grabbed and potentially consumed by the elephant, consideration should be given to the material selected to be used as the target.

### Leg Restraints

Leg restraints or tethers are an acceptable and necessary tool in the management of captive elephants. Tethers provide a means to limit an elephant's movements and permit the safe handling of the elephant. Limiting the elephant's movement can facilitate foot work, feeding, veterinary procedures, elephant transports, elephant introductions, parturition, scientific investigation, training new handlers, training new behaviors, preventing fighting, protecting facilities, as well as fulfilling many other management and husbandry needs.

Tethering is just one component of an elephant management program. The decision to tether should take into



Zoo Atlanta, Eric Sampson

consideration the best interest of the elephant in the given circumstance. For instance, limiting the elephant's movement at night is a viable alternative to keeping elephants in single stall accommodations. Under normal circumstances, elephants should not be tethered continuously for more than 16 hours without exercise. Elephants under medical care or other special circumstances, such as a mother demonstrating aggressiveness towards her new baby, may require longer tethering periods.

When tethering an elephant is determined to be necessary, the elephant should be tethered by one front leg and the rear leg on the opposite side or, in short-term circumstances, by one front leg only. The tethers should be rotated on alternate legs every other night to prevent possible injury, and the elephant's legs should be inspected daily. In some situations, elephants should be tethered on all four legs, such as for transport, parturition, certain procedures in an elephant restraint device, etc.

Elephants should be tethered on a clean level surface, which preferably slopes to a drain. For short-term use, tethers can be made of rope or nylon straps. For long term or overnight use, chains are the preferred method of restraint. Tethers made of absorbable material must be




Seneca Park Zoo

Right: Handlers secure the front leg tether.  
Below: Handler secures the rear leg tether.

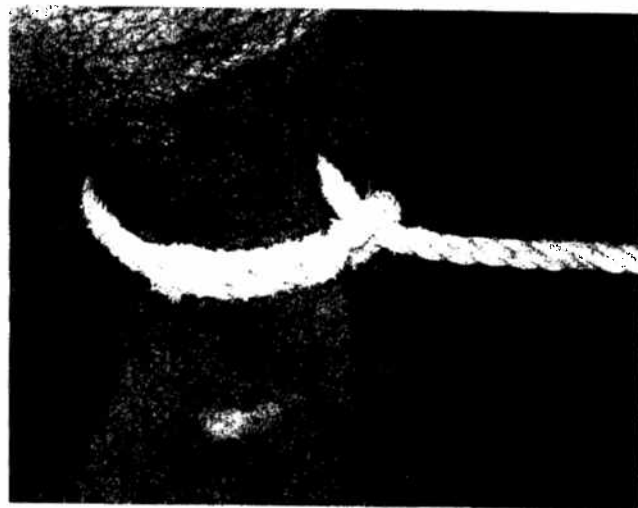


Six Flags Marine World



For member institutions of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA), the AZA Standards for Elephant Care and Management adopted March 21, 2001, states, "Chaining is acceptable as a method of temporary restraint. However, elephants must not be subjected to prolonged chaining (for the majority of a 24-hour period) unless necessary for veterinary treatment or transport. Institutions that regularly use chains for some portion of the day must alternate the chained foot on a daily basis. All new construction and major renovations must be constructed in a manner that minimizes or eliminates the need for chaining."

**\*\*Note: If AZA policies on chaining require new construction, rather than procedural changes, then institutions will have five years to comply with this requirement. Plans must be in place within three years and institutions must apply for a variance from the AZA Accreditation Commission.\*\***



Indianapolis Zoo

Soft cotton rope used as restraint.

cleaned daily and given an opportunity to dry before their next use. The tethers should be long enough to allow the elephant to lie down and get to its feet easily, but not too long to allow the elephant to turn and become entangled in them.

Ropes are especially useful in limiting and guiding the direction of the elephant's movement. Ropes can be used to make hobbles to limit the movement of an elephant or a harness for a new baby being introduced to its mother for the first time. Ropes are often used when training an elephant and assisting an elephant that is unable to rise. Ropes used in elephant management should be of appropriate strength, thickness, and material so as to not cause



Example of chains and rope used together.

injury or abrasions under normal circumstances. Cotton braided, or natural fiber rope of 1 1/4" thickness, is often recommended but not in all cases.

Elephant handlers should be well-versed in the various and proper uses for ropes. It is also recommended that handlers be acquainted with rope splicing and knowledgeable about tying appropriate knots. For the protection of the elephant and handlers, a sharp knife should be on hand any time rope is used.

Elephant handlers should be well-informed about the types of chain and hardware used to tether an elephant, as well as appropriate chain construction and proper fit to the elephant's leg. The front leg chain should be loose on the foot below the ankle joint but with no chance of slipping off. The chain on the hind leg should fit snugly and be placed higher on the leg between the ankle and the knee (or stifle joint). Front leg bracelets are commonly connected using brummel hooks or clevises. Front leg chains should have at least one swivel added so the chain does not twist. Rear leg bracelets are usually connected with quick links, hooks, or clevises. Some facilities cover the leg bracelets with soft material such as rope or fire hose. Padded chains, straps of leather or nylon, or anklets made of cotton rope have all been used successfully, and are recommended for very young elephants and for extended periods of tethering of adult elephants.

All tethers should be checked routinely by the handlers, and any tethers showing signs of wear should be immediately replaced. Tethers need to be secured by rings imbedded in a concrete wall, floor, concrete "deadman," or other immovable anchor and placed about 18 feet apart. The placement of the rings, or attachment, is dependent on the enclosure and the facility's elephant management protocol. When acquiring the proper size chain and hardware, it is a good idea to check with a company specializing in hoisting or chaining equipment as not all chain is built for the amount of pressure an elephant can exert. The choice of what chain tensile strength to use should be based on the age, size, and weight of the individual elephant.

All facilities should develop a tethering protocol so that each elephant handler is familiar with the tethering procedure. This will ensure that the tethers are used correctly, efficiently, and humanely. For example, untethered and unsupervised elephants should not have access to tethered elephants as they can cause injury to their tethered stallmates. In addition, every handler in the



For AZA member institutions, it is stated in the AZA Standards for Elephant Management and Care adopted March 21, 2001, that "Electrical devices designed for use on livestock, such as commercially manufactured electric prods and shocking collars/belts, are prohibited as routine training tools or for handling animals during exhibition. Electric prods are permissible only as an emergency safety device; however, their use is restricted to situations in which keepers feel the imminent need to defend themselves against elephant attacks, or to protect an elephant from possible injury."

## Tethering Procedure at the Indianapolis Zoo

### Untethering an elephant

Elephant should stand steady with trunk raised.

The handler removes the back leg first while the elephant is resting all four feet on the ground.

Handler then removes the front leg tether with the elephant standing steady but with the foot raised to level of the handler's waist so the handler is standing during the procedure.

### Tethering an elephant

The elephant should stand steady with the trunk raised.

The handler places the front leg tether on first with the foot raised to level of handler's waist, so the handler can stand erect.

The handler places the rear leg tether on with the elephant standing steady with all four feet on the ground. The tether is placed snugly on the diagonal rear leg just below the stifle joint.

facility should put all tethers on exactly the same way each time, that is, right to left, all hooks facing up, etc. In the case of an emergency, this reduces questions or mishandling of the hardware in tethering or untethering the elephant. For this reason, brummel hooks or similar closures are recommended over clevises that require pliers to get on and off.

### Bolt Cutters

Bolt cutters of sufficient size and strength that are in good working order should be easily accessible to the elephant handlers at all times. Bolt cutters are invaluable when needing to free an elephant quickly from physical restraints or if entangled in cable fencing or electric wire.

### Mechanical Assistance

There are a number of devices that aid handlers, especially in emergencies. These devices include a winch, come-a-long, and block and tackle. This equipment should be of sufficient size and strength to support an elephant, in good working order, and should be easily accessible to elephant handlers at all times. This equipment can help position an elephant, or assist in lifting an elephant that is sick or injured and unable to get to its feet by itself. It must be stressed that handlers lacking the knowledge or experience of using this type of equipment must get assistance in order to prevent injuries.

### Electric Tools

The only form of electricity acceptable for use with managing elephants is a commercially manufactured cattle prod and electric fencing (see Facility Design, p. 75). The cattle prod should be used only for handler protection, or when the safety of the elephant is compromised, such as in fighting with another elephant. It is not appropriate that an