



## IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

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May 19, 2009

Stuart D. Strahl, PhD  
Director  
Brookfield Zoo  
3300 Golf Road  
Brookfield, IL 60513

VIA FAX: 708/688-7309

Dear Dr. Strahl:

We share your sorrow at the tragic death of the elephant, Affie. You are now faced with an important decision regarding the future of your zoo's lone, surviving elephant, Christy, as well as the broader issue of keeping elephants at the Brookfield Zoo.

On behalf of our members internationally, In Defense of Animals (IDA) urges you to make the ethically and morally responsible decision to close the Brookfield Zoo's elephant exhibit and send Christy to a sanctuary. Simply put, Brookfield Zoo does not have the vast space, natural conditions and climate necessary to provide elephants, Earth's largest land mammals, with a high quality of life.

As you know, free-ranging African elephants are highly intelligent and vigorous animals that hail from warm climates, where they range tens of miles a day and live in closely bonded societies. At Brookfield Zoo, as at most zoos throughout the country, the elephants are forced to live in a small, barren enclosure that bears no semblance to their natural home. Further, they spend the majority of the long Midwest winters in tiny indoor cages that do not allow for adequate movement or mental stimulation.

Unfortunately, no amount of care and medical attention that Brookfield Zoo provides to the elephants can compensate for the failure of their cramped and unnatural exhibit to meet their physical, social and psychological needs. And elephants are suffering and dying prematurely because of it.

A study published in the prestigious and rigorously peer-reviewed journal *Science* (Dec. 2008) reported that free-ranging female elephants at Kenya's Amboseli National Park have a median life span of 56 years. Yet, despite the fact Affie received regular daily and veterinary care and a controlled, nutritious diet, she died almost 20 years sooner than her wild counterparts. Contrary to zoo assertions, she was not a geriatric elephant.

We are further concerned that Affie's life may have been cut short by foot and/or joint disease, problems caused by inadequate zoo conditions. This is strongly suggested by the fact that the zoo provided specialized flooring and a sand pile for her to lie against, both of which are prescribed for elephants suffering from these serious ailments.

As the welfare of the elephants at Brookfield Zoo is of great public interest, we request that you publicly release the veterinary records for both Affie and Christy, Affie's preliminary necropsy report, and the final necropsy report when available.

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The fact is elephants are not thriving in zoos, therefore, it would be inhumane to continue to keep Christy at the Brookfield Zoo, especially now that she is alone. Bringing in another elephant is not the answer because the Zoo cannot provide a good quality of life for elephants. Even if the exhibit is expanded, it will not significantly change overall conditions.

The nation's two elephant sanctuaries, located in Tennessee and California, have set the bar for elephant care today by providing natural-habitat environments with large open spaces for elephants to roam and a rich social experience. The sanctuaries have restored quality of life to numerous elephants debilitated by years of intense confinement in zoos and circuses.

Sixteen U.S. zoos have closed or plan to close their elephant exhibits. In recent years, zoos in Los Angeles, Anchorage and Philadelphia joined a growing list of zoos that have opted to send elephants to sanctuaries.

It's too late for Affie, but it's not too late for the Brookfield Zoo to do the right thing by sending Christy to an elephant sanctuary and permanently closing the elephant exhibit. We urge you to make the right decision and ensure that no more elephants suffer and die prematurely at Brookfield Zoo.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Elliot M. Katz".

Elliot M. Katz, DVM  
President