

Daily Orphan Elephant Healthcare Checklist for Caregivers

Area of interest	Observation or behavior	Normal / healthy	Abnormal / unhealthy	Examples of possible problems
A: Attitude	Observe	Bright, alert, responsive (BAR); moving - ears flapping, trunk or tail swinging or swaying	Listless, not moving, head down, head pressing, evidence of pain	Many medical or social problems
A: Appetite	Observe amount of food offered and amount consumed; observe chewing or suckling behavior	Typical appetite for individual resulting in a healthy body condition	Decreased or not eating	Many medical problems
B: Body scan	Observe the head, legs, and all sides of the elephant. Weigh if possible.	Neither too fat nor too lean, skin supple, no wounds	Weight loss; sunken abdomen, prominent ribs (see body condition index), wounds. Normal weight gain for orphan calves is ~ 1 kg/day	Many medical problems
C: Color and teeth	Open mouth wide	Normal position of teeth - no fragments; pink tongue and mucous membranes	Malposition of tooth, tooth fragment, pale or dark tongue or mucous membranes	Dental problem, anemia, infection
D: Dung and urine	Observe feces	Feces are typical for the age of the calf. There is no straining to defecate or diarrhea	Feces are very loose or there is diarrhea, the elephant is straining to defecate, the number of defecations is increased or decreased, the color is significantly different, there is excessive undigested material in older calves that are eating solid food	Diet change; parasites; tooth problem; ingestion of foreign material, colic, impaction, toxin, bacterial infection, other
	Observe urine	Steady stream, no straining, typically yellow to gold in color, pleasant odor.	Straining, decreased volume or frequency; unusual color; bad odor	Urinary tract infection, bladder stones (uncommon)
E: Eyes and Ears	Observe for squinting, abnormal discharge, elevation of the 3rd eyelid, or cloudiness to the cornea. Observe for any discharge from the ears or rubbing the ears.	Clear, bright, eyelids fully open and 3rd eyelid retracted	Dull; cloudy; lid closed or partially closed; 3rd eyelid elevated; squinting; excessive discharge. Elephants lack a lacrimal apparatus so it is normal for tears to overflow onto the face.	Eye: Conjunctivitis (inflammation of the lining of the eye), corneal ulcer, foreign body, cataract, other. Ear: Bacterial infection, foreign body
F: Feet	Examine all four feet on the dorsal and palmar/plantar surfaces	Nails short (non-weight bearing), cuticles soft, space between nails, healthy pads	Overgrowth of nails, cuticles or pad (sole); nail cracks, nail abscess, sole abscess, black tracks on nail or pad, bad odor	Foot problems - nails too long, pad uneven, foreign body in pad; arthritis, osteomyelitis (bone infection). Calves with infected umbilical cords can develop septic arthritis.
G: Gait	Observe the calf moving	Steady even gait with normal flexion of carpus (wrist) and tarsus (ankle);	Limping, stiffness, reluctant to flex carpus or tarsus, swinging hind leg out	Foot problems - nails too long, pad uneven, foreign body in pad; arthritis, osteomyelitis (bone infection).