



# *Care For Us*

Asian Elephant (*Elephas maximus*)

# Animal Welfare

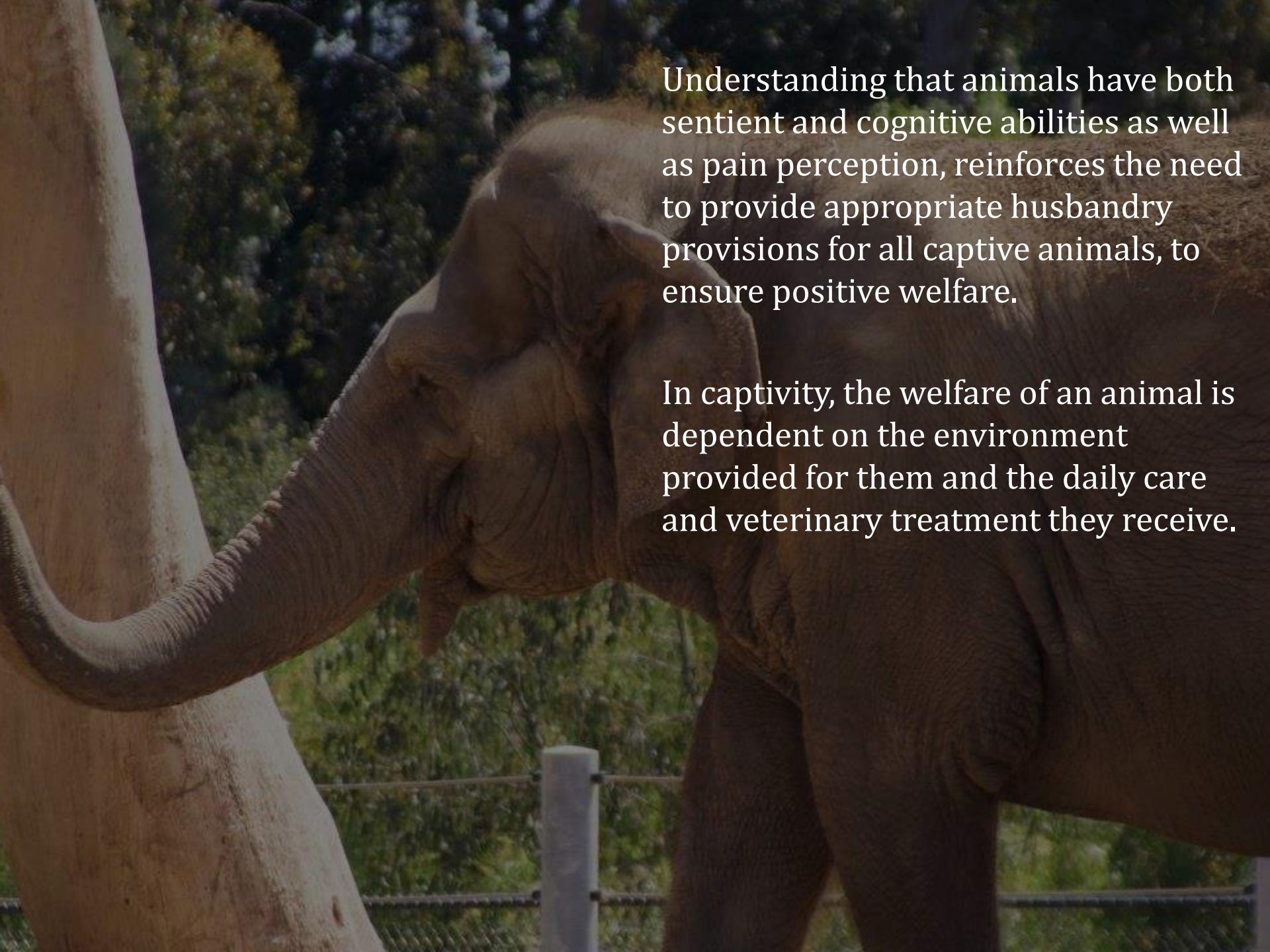
Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have positive welfare.

A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.





A photograph of an elephant in a zoo enclosure. The elephant is standing next to a large tree trunk on the left. Its trunk is curled upwards. In the background, there is a chain-link fence and dense green foliage. The image has a semi-transparent dark overlay on the right side where the text is located.

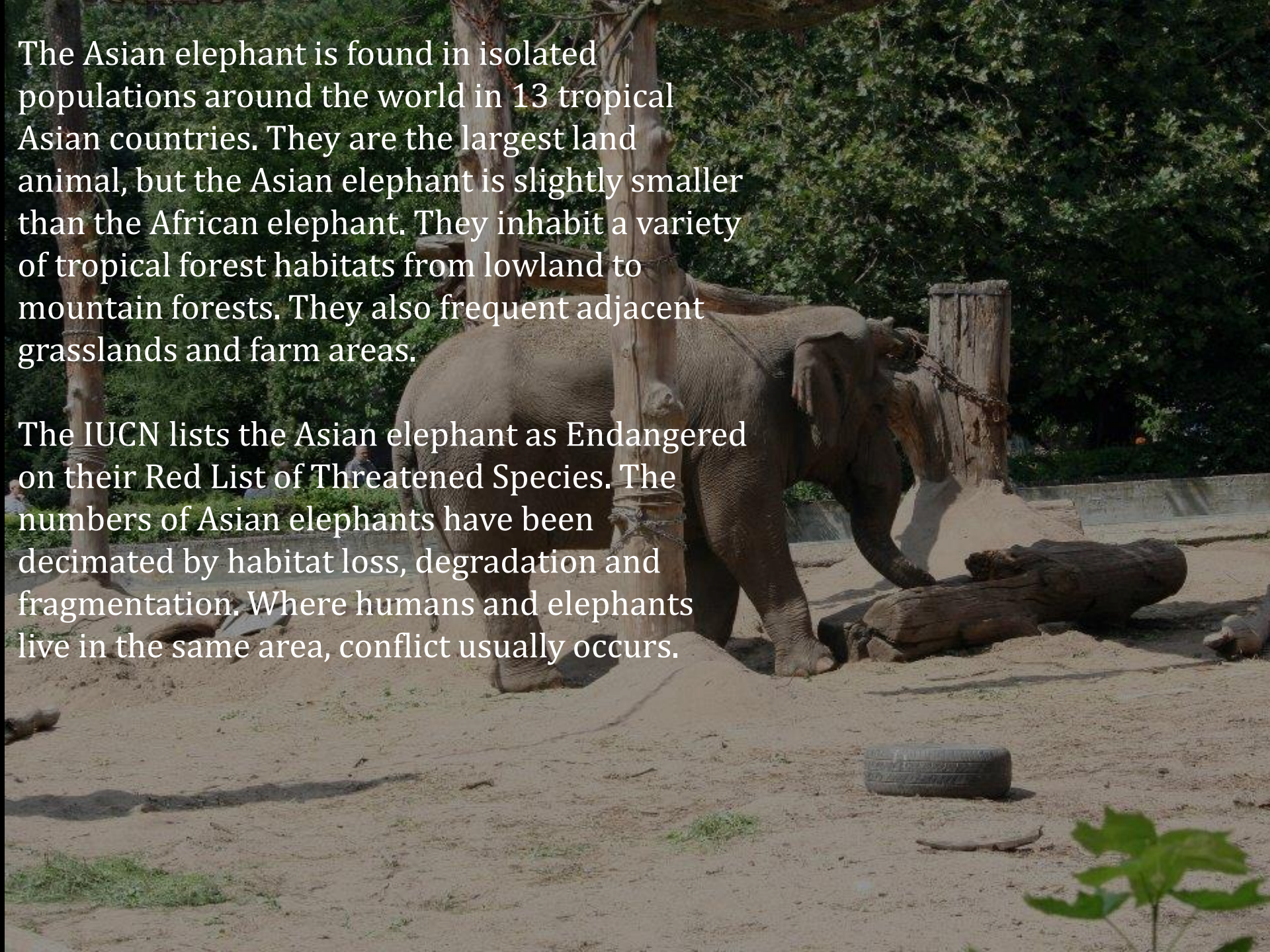
Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.



The Asian elephant is found in isolated populations around the world in 13 tropical Asian countries. They are the largest land animal, but the Asian elephant is slightly smaller than the African elephant. They inhabit a variety of tropical forest habitats from lowland to mountain forests. They also frequent adjacent grasslands and farm areas.

The IUCN lists the Asian elephant as Endangered on their Red List of Threatened Species. The numbers of Asian elephants have been decimated by habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation. Where humans and elephants live in the same area, conflict usually occurs.





# Elephants Like to Communicate

A photograph of two elephants in a naturalistic enclosure. One elephant is in the foreground, its head and trunk visible, reaching towards the other elephant. The second elephant is slightly behind and to the left, partially obscured. They appear to be near a body of water or a muddy area, with some water visible at the bottom. The background shows some greenery and a fence.

Elephants have a complex repertoire of communication which includes touching, vocalising, olfaction (smelling) and body postures. Elephants are very tactile animals.

Elephants communicate vocally via rumbles, bellows and moans and they also emit a low frequency infrasound that can travel for miles. Communication and socialising are incredibly important to elephants and they support their complex social and family structures.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Allow for tactile (touching) interactions between the elephant group. Provide for a range of social interactions between different elephants and family units.



# Elephants Like to Eat

Elephants can grow up to 21 feet long and 10 feet tall, weighing up to 11,000 pounds. Food is extremely important to an elephant, eating anything from roots, grasses, fruits and bark, they consume up to 300 pounds (136 kgs) of food in a single day, roaming great distances to find the food they need. They can spend up to 16 hours a day just feeding, foraging for food using their trunks.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Provide multiple feeding opportunities within the elephant's environment, that can encourage foraging and social eating opportunities.





A close-up photograph of an elephant's head and trunk. The elephant's skin is dark grey and heavily wrinkled. Its trunk is thick and textured, with a small tusk visible at the tip. A metal collar with a chain is attached to the trunk. The background is blurred, showing a natural outdoor setting.

# Elephants are Intelligent

Elephants are extremely intelligent and have memories that can span many years. This helps them find watering holes they remember from the past and enables them to have complex relationships. Elephants can display a range of deep and complicated emotions, including grief, joy, anger and playfulness. Elephants have been seen to exhibit tool use, from scratching themselves using a stick or using branches as fly switches, they may modify tools for various activities.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Provide an interesting and species-specific challenge environment. Utilise space and novel objects to hide food and encourage tool manipulation. Ensure socialisation is available so elephants can form complex relationships.

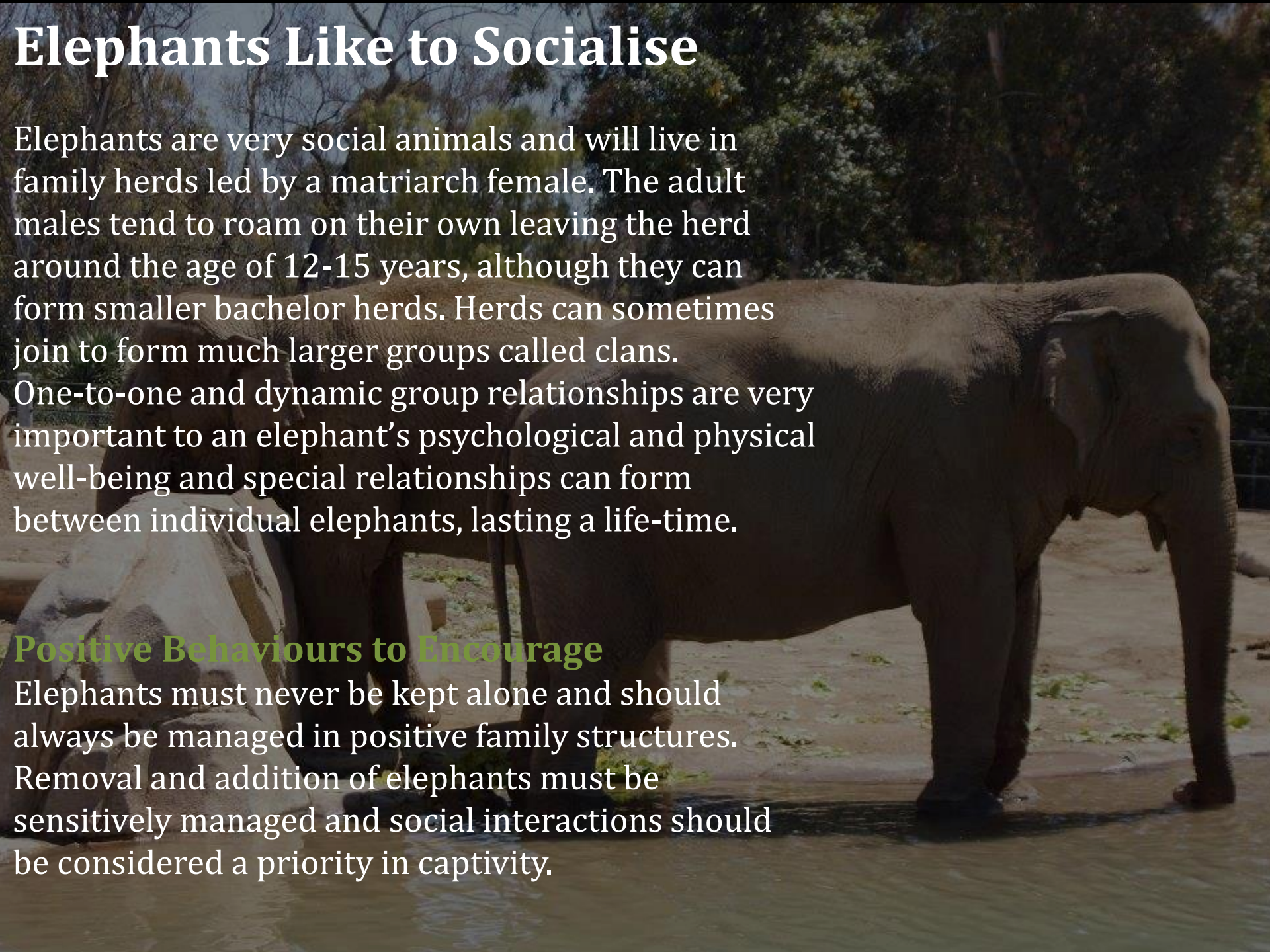


# Elephants Like to Socialise

Elephants are very social animals and will live in family herds led by a matriarch female. The adult males tend to roam on their own leaving the herd around the age of 12-15 years, although they can form smaller bachelor herds. Herds can sometimes join to form much larger groups called clans. One-to-one and dynamic group relationships are very important to an elephant's psychological and physical well-being and special relationships can form between individual elephants, lasting a life-time.

## Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Elephants must never be kept alone and should always be managed in positive family structures. Removal and addition of elephants must be sensitively managed and social interactions should be considered a priority in captivity.





A photograph of a young elephant calf in the foreground, looking towards the right. In the background, the trunk and part of the body of a larger adult elephant are visible, reaching towards the calf. The setting appears to be a dirt enclosure with some dry grass.

# Elephants Like to Play

Young elephants love to play and this can include head to head sparring and trunk wrestling, mounting, charging and rolling. Calves older than six months of age may form play-groups. Females, particularly juveniles, frequently play with young calves. The cow-calf bond is strong. Reciprocity in allomothering may play an important part in establishing close relationships between females within a herd.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Always allow for positive social interactions between elephants in captivity and encourage the formation of relationships.



# Elephants Use Their Body

Elephants use their ears to radiate heat but also use their trunks to spray water on themselves to keep cool. An elephant trunk contracts about 100,000 different muscles and is used for many different functions, such as smelling, drinking, trumpeting, and grabbing objects. The finger-like feature at the end is used to help grab small items.

## **Positive Behaviours to Encourage**

Provide objects and an enclosure that encourages elephants to use their trunks, ears and bodies for positive interactions and behaviours. Pools, dust baths, branches and toys will encourage elephants to use their environment.



# Elephants Enjoy...

Playing, forming close bonds with their young, swimming, and eating different and interesting food.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

More Elephant Care Information  
[HERE](#)

