

Chair's Update no 28. 14th April 2026

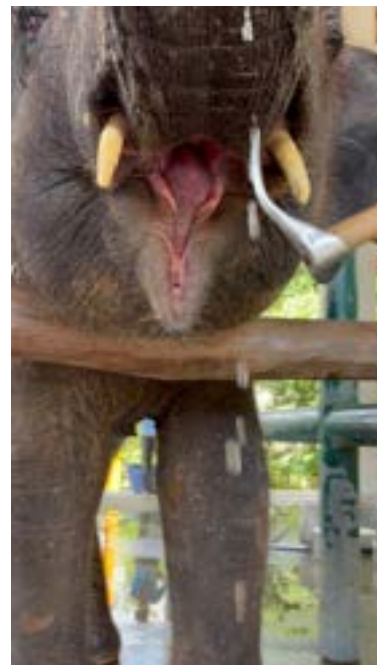
Dear Supporters

I am writing this update fresh from my latest visit to the STEF Veterinary Centre last week! Visits to STEF's hospital in Thailand always provide valuable firsthand information, and allow for staff evaluations, equipment and buildings checks and provide the UK team with a fresh focus on our efforts to support Thailand's domestic elephants. One of STEF's primary aims alongside the provision of free veterinary care, is to educate within the local community, and the main purpose of this latest trip was to help run a day course, which was held on the 7th of April 2026, at the nearby Erewan Hotel, in Khok Kloei.

The main aim of this year's educational day was to raise awareness of the symptoms shown by elephants suffering from Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpes Virus (EEHV), in the hope that the STEF vets may receive them at the hospital earlier, and be therefore more likely to save them, by initiating appropriate treatment *before* they get too sick.



4-year-old Meesub presented to STEF with head swelling, and his demeanor was dull



A typical symptom of EEHV is a bright pink to purple tongue, and bruising in the mouth



We were delighted to be able to bring together the key elephant specialists within Thailand who are collaborating with research groups in Utrecht and the USA on the development of a vaccine against this deadly disease, and to introduce them to the possibility of STEF assisting with a vaccine trial, when the time comes. The speakers on the course were of the highest standard, which really lent gravitas to our message about the importance of EEHV and elephant welfare. It was an honour to welcome Dr Chatchote Thitaram (Dr Bic), Assistant Professor at Chiang Mai University, Dr Taweepoke Angkawanish (Dr Tom) from the Thailand Elephant Conservation Centre, Lampang, Dr Supaphen Sripiboon (Dr M), Assistant Professor at Kasetsart University, Bangkok and Dr Xander de Haan, Associate Professor University of Utrecht, the Netherlands in addition to the STEF Veterinary Centre team. In addition, STEF's UK Trustee, elephant expert Dr Fieke Molenaar gave an excellent practical lecture on elephant dentistry. The STEF Veterinary Centre team produced two flyers for the delegates, one highlighting in picture form the symptoms of EEHV, and one promoting the STEF Veterinary Centre.

Attendees were a mix of local university department heads, veterinary students, local vets, mahouts and elephant owners. Two national park officers attended too and were very pleased with the day. General feedback was very positive, although the background to EEHV science was for some a bit complex. More courses were requested, especially with a focus on elephant management and husbandry, such as foot care.



Conference delegates at the Erawan Hotel,
Khok Kloi



The speakers and STEF Veterinary Centre team
sitting down to a meal after the course

At the end of the lectures, we took the delegates to the STEF Veterinary Centre to see the facilities. Of our four inpatients present, one 25-year-old elephant is undergoing treatment for a neurologic condition, believed to be a result of eating foliage close to the edge of a crop which had been recently sprayed with a pesticide. Eating plant material contaminated with pesticide has caused nerve paralysis, and the elephant is unable to use her trunk to eat or drink and has loss of use of many of her facial muscles also. She had become very thin and weak. Over the past month's stay at the hospital she has shown improvement but still requires support from two slings to allow her to stay on her feet. She is also being hand fed and watered, while her trunk regains its function. We are indebted to the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, The



Michael and Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust and to the Animal Defence Trust for awarding STEF grants for this specific equipment, which was only installed in December.



Both hoists working well to support each end of this elephant, to enable her to stand



The Mahout is shredding sugar cane and mixing it with oats and dates to hand feed her

I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight our challenge events, in case you or a friend feel inspired, - why not take a look!

<https://southernthailandelevants.org/challenge-events/#top>

We can offer you a guaranteed place at an event that inspires you, such as the Great South Run, a tough Mudder in the Midlands, or even the Amsterdam half marathon, in return for you fundraising for STEF to complete your challenge!

Keep an eye on our website as we develop our Education page, and launch "Nam Tarn tails", a day in the life of STEF Veterinary Centre's resident dog...

Finally, we are seeking a new Hon Secretary. This is a voluntary position with the STEF UK Board of Trustees. If this is of interest, please do see the following advert for more details.

<https://restless.co.uk/volunteer-job/reach-volunteering-board-secretary-amp-optional-trustee-girton-1296379/>

As ever, our enormous thanks are extended to Vernon and Shirley Hill, The Two R's Charitable Trust, The Anthony V Martin Charitable Foundation, The Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, The Hawthorne Trust, The Marjorie Coote Animal Charity Trust, The Marchig Animal Welfare



Trust, The Beryl Evetts and Robert Luff Animal Welfare Trust, The Graham Kirkham Foundation, The Alborada Trust, The Castanea Trust, The Ofenheim Trust, The Animal Defence Trust, The Martin Wills Wildlife Maintenance Trust, The Calypso Browning Trust, The Robert Clutterbuck Charitable Trust, The Michael and Shirley Hunt Charitable Trust, The Alice Noakes Memorial Trust, The Edith Murpy Trust and other Trusts and individuals.

In addition, we are *so very grateful* to the team at Blackpool Zoo, and for Blackpool Zoo supporters, for all their fundraising support of STEF, over the past two years. Those local to the zoo may like to attend this year's "Elefest", on Friday 10th July, where STEF will have a stand once again.

I do hope you enjoy the lighter days and warmer spring weather just around the corner, and from us all, thank you once again, for your continued interest and support of our hard-working charity.

Our very best wishes to you all,

Dr Merry Smith

MA Vet MB PhD Cert ES DIP ECVS AECVDI MRCVS

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www.southernthailandelephants.org

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