



# AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF ZOO VETERINARIANS

*"Dedicated to wildlife health and conservation"*

581705 White Oak Road • Yulee, Florida, 32097 • 904-225-3275 • Fax 904-225-3289

## ELEPHANT GUIDES AND TETHERS

### **AVMA Policy:**

Elephant guides are husbandry tools that consist of a shaft capped by one straight and one curved end. The ends are blunt and tapered, and are used to touch parts of the elephant's body as a cue to elicit specific actions or behaviors, with the handler exerting very little pressure. The ends should contact, but should not tear or penetrate the skin. The AVMA condemns the use of guides to puncture, lacerate, strike or inflict harm upon an elephant.

Tethers provide a means to temporarily limit an elephant's movement for elephant or human safety and well-being. Tethers can be constructed of rope, chain, or nylon webbing, and their use and fit should not result in discomfort or skin injury. Forelimb tethers should be loose on the foot below the ankle joint, and hind limb tethers should fit snugly on the limb between the ankle and knee joints. Tether length should be sufficient to allow the elephant to easily lie down and rise. The AVMA only supports the use of tethers for the shortest time required for specific management purposes

**AAZV Position:** Support AVMA Policy

**Justification:** The use of guides and/or tethers are important for accomplishing specific management purposes due to an elephant's size, weight, and the varied environments in which elephants are maintained and transported. As veterinarians these purposes may include examinations, sample collection and/or treatments of an elephant. The current AVMA policy supporting the option for use of guides and tethers results in a safer environment for the elephant, the elephant handler, and the veterinarian.

### **AAZV CONTACT:**

**Wm. Kirk Suedmeyer, DVM, Dipl. ACZM**

Wm. Kirk Suedmeyer, DVM, Dip ACZM  
President, American Association of Zoo Veterinarians  
Director of Animal Health and Research  
Director of Emergency Medical Services  
The Kansas City Zoo  
6800 Zoo Drive, Kansas City, MO 64132-1711