



EEHV News

August 15, 2019

Wildlife and zoo veterinarians, scientists, conservationists, and elephant specialists work for solutions to help young elephants threatened globally by EEHV virus

An international group of zoo and wildlife veterinarians, researchers, virologists, epidemiologists and elephant management experts from five countries met at White Oak Conservation Center, in northeast Florida, on Aug. 13-14, 2018, to prioritize needs to fight EEHV (elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus), a virus that kills young elephants in the wild and in human care.

EEHV is a virus carried naturally by African and Asian elephants. It can also cause severe disease in Asian, and less frequently, African elephants between 1 and 8 years of age. The virus can cause a severe hemorrhagic or bleeding disease that can be fatal within 1-5 days of signs of illness.

The Advisory Group meeting included 25 experts from the United States, Thailand, India, Singapore, and Europe.

Deaths of young elephants in elephant range countries – both in the wild and in human care – and in zoos in the U.S. and Europe, threaten the global population of critically endangered Asian elephants whose numbers are ten times fewer than the more well-known African elephants.

During the working session, the Advisory Group refined monitoring and treatment protocols to help with early detection and emergency treatment because time is critical once an elephant is diagnosed. Utilizing protocols developed by the Advisory Group, elephant care staff have saved a significant number elephant calves ill from EEHV-hemorrhagic disease.

Priorities for the Advisory Group include:

- Identifying risk factors associated with the development of EEHV-hemorrhagic disease in elephants

- Better understanding the pathogenesis and pathophysiology of EEHV- hemorrhagic disease in elephants
- Identifying early clinical findings in EEHV-hemorrhagic disease to facilitate timely diagnosis
- Developing a vaccine to reduce severity of EEHV-hemorrhagic illness, and developing funding and deployment strategies for how to produce and implement it.

Researchers globally are sharing information and findings in an attempt to reduce the devastating effect of EEHV.

Financial support for the meeting was provided by the Elephant Managers Association, the International Elephant Foundation, the Smithsonian’s National Zoo, the Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden, and the EEHV Consortium. The meeting was generously hosted by White Oak Conservation Center.



About the EEHV Advisory Group

The EEHV Advisory Group is a subcommittee of the AZA Elephant TAG Veterinary Advisory Group.

The group’s mission is to work to decrease elephant morbidity and mortality due to EEHV while supporting elephant-holding institution programming by:

- Disseminating knowledge of current best practices for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of EEHV
- Providing private and public elephant-holding facilities with technical assistance; and
- Facilitating research by building international collaborations.

For more information about the EEHV and the Advisory Group’s work, visit eehvinfo.org.

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