

**MANAGEMENT AND REHABILITATION OF YOUNG
ELEPHANTS AT
ELEPHANT TRANSIT HOME, UDAWALAWE.**

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The elephant transit home (ETH) at Udawalawe, Sri Lanka, started in 1995, is a facility to raise and subsequently release the orphaned elephant calves from wild back to wild. It is the pioneering attempt of this nature for Asian elephants. The facility has supplemented/released thirty nine individuals to the wild in four batches from 1998 to 2004. The reception of elephant orphans, group composition, management, rehabilitation process and post released monitoring of the orphaned calves at ETH were investigated. The problems related to the management and rehabilitation, and re-integration were identified. The recommendations to improve the facility were listed. The heights of the orphans were obtained to determine the relationship with fore foot circumference, impression of the foot and the age of the individual.

The analysis of the group composition revealed that most of the orphaned calves were from the North-western and North-eastern wildlife regions. The causes for being orphaned were unknown in 61% of the cases while 27% of them were due to accidental falling into pits and water wells. 58% of the received calves were below the six months of age. The indigestion of milk formula and septicemia from chronic wounds were the most common etiology of mortality at the facility.

The regression analyses of the height of the individuals with fore foot circumference and the impression of the fore foot circumference showed a strong relationship between the two parameters in females ($R^2 = 0.9413$) as well as males ($R^2 = 0.9029$). The natural logarithmic value of the height showed a strong relationship with age of females ($R^2 = 0.9246$) and males ($R^2 = 0.9249$).

The analysis of the monitoring records from 1998 to 2003 showed the distribution of the released radio collared individuals in the Udawalawe national park.

The successful integration and establishment of the supplemented individuals into the wild herds and wild conditions reveal the effectiveness of the management and rehabilitation process adopted at elephant transit home, Udawalawe.