

NEWS
For Immediate Release

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**Victory for Captive Elephants! United States Department of
Agriculture Makes History by Confiscating Ailing Elephant**

HOHENWALD, Tenn. (December 9, 2003) — The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee held a news conference today in Nashville, Tennessee, to discuss the unprecedented action taken earlier this month by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). For the first time in its history, the USDA has confiscated an ailing elephant.

Delhi, a 57-year-old Asian elephant was removed from the Hawthorn Corporation facility, an Illinois-based company that leases elephants to circuses, because her "health [was] at serious risk from a lack of veterinary treatment and adequate veterinary care," USDA spokesman Jim Rogers said.

The USDA had been monitoring Delhi's condition since March 4, 2002, when she was found "in a serious health emergency." Both of her front legs were twice their normal size and were swollen up to her chest. She could not bend her front legs at the elbows, was reluctant to bear weight on her front legs, and had difficulty walking. Delhi sustained severe chemical burns to both front legs when Hawthorn Corporation used undiluted formaldehyde to soak her feet. After 20 months of monitoring Delhi's condition, the USDA determined that Delhi was receiving inadequate veterinary care and that her life was in imminent danger.

Based on Delhi's rapidly deteriorating condition, the USDA arranged for her confiscation and transfer to The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. She arrived at the sanctuary on November 23, 2003.

Dr. Ed Ramsay, doctor of veterinary medicine, diplomat of the American College of Zoological Medicine, and associate professor of veterinary medicine at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, performed radiographs on Delhi last Monday. After taking x-rays and studying the film, he stated that "Delhi has severe osteomyelitis in both front feet. There are bony infections present in both forefeet and these infections correspond to the large, eruptive lesions visible on Delhi's feet."

Osteomyelitis is the number one killer of captive elephants. Delhi's condition is so advanced that recovery is unrealistic. Dr. Ramsay recommended foot soaks, daily doses of painkillers, and oral antibiotics. The sanctuary will provide hospice care for Delhi. Her new keepers will monitor her condition continuously and provide pain management as needed.

According to Carol Buckley, co-founder and co-director of The Elephant Sanctuary, "The news is devastating. But now we will focus on making Delhi comfortable." The goal of Delhi's treatment is to stop the spread of infection. "We want to keep the infection from spreading into the bones of her forelegs. Delhi will receive antibiotics for the infection and painkillers to manage the pain," Buckley stated. There is no estimate as to how long Delhi might live.

According to Rogers, the USDA has cited John Cuneo of Richmond, Illinois, and his company, the Hawthorn Corporation, with violations of the Animal Welfare Act. Cuneo and the Hawthorn Corporation owned Delhi for 35 years. On April 9, 2003, the USDA filed charges against the Hawthorn Corporation, several of its employees, and Walker Bros. Circus, which rented Hawthorn's

elephants. The complaint alleges 47 violations of the minimum standards of care established in the Animal Welfare Act that affected 12 elephants between March 29, 2001, and June 1, 2002.

Delhi has spent her entire life traveling and performing in circuses. She has entertained tens of thousands of people over her 55-year career, including many in middle Tennessee. In 1997, Delhi performed with the Walker Bros. Circus at City Park in downtown Hohenwald, home of The Elephant Sanctuary. Even then, Delhi showed signs of severe foot disease.

The USDA has turned contractual ownership of Delhi over to The Elephant Sanctuary. This ensures that Delhi will never be removed from the sanctuary or returned to her previous owner. The USDA requires that Delhi remain in quarantine for six months. The Elephant Sanctuary has already made renovations to her quarantine barn, and a new corral is under construction to expand her yard. The Elephant Sanctuary bears the entire financial responsibility for Delhi's care, which could exceed \$80,000 over the next six months.

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