



This information was provided courtesy of and updated by Mary-Ann Holm. Last updated: January 28, 2017.

This is the history of Lucy's life and the campaign for her to date — important for all Lucy advocates to know.

The campaign for Lucy continues with the ongoing support of [Zoocheck](#) and [Voice for Animals Humane Society](#) – Edmonton as well as many individuals in Edmonton, throughout Canada and the world. Together we are committed to securing an independent expert assessment of Lucy to determine her ability to travel to a sanctuary.

Lucy's campaign needs Edmontonians to assist with local efforts. If you live in Edmonton and are interested in volunteering for activities like tabling, local education and outreach, please contact Friends of Lucy at friendsoflucy@gmail.com or Mary-Ann Holm. We will also be posting an upcoming email action to contact relevant agencies in Canada to help Lucy.

Reports

Click on each to download and read in full.

[Affidavit of Dr. Henry Melvyn Richardson](#): "In this affidavit I provide my opinion on the issue of whether Lucy the elephant ("Lucy"), held at the Edmonton Valley Zoo (the "Valley Zoo") is in distress, as that term is defined in section 1(2) of the Animal Protection Act R.S.A. 2000 c. A-41 and whether her conditions at the Valley Zoo meet applicable regulations or "reasonable and generally accepted practices" of elephant care, management and husbandry, pursuant to section 2(2) of the Animal Protection Act."

[Affidavit of Dr. Joyce Poole](#): "In this affidavit, I discuss the biology, ecology, socialization and behavior of elephants in general. I also consider these in the context of the conditions in which Lucy, a 34-year-old female Asian elephant, is living in the Valley Zoo in Edmonton."

[Affidavit of Dr. Philip K. Ensley](#): "I have been asked and I am willing to provide an expert opinion regarding whether Lucy the elephant is in distress at Valley Zoo in Edmonton, Alberta and the impact that the conditions and standard of care at the Valley Zoo have had upon her health. As a result of my professional qualifications as well as my review of relevant records and documents I have knowledge of the matters herein deposed."

[One Veterinarian's Search for Truth in the "Lucy the Elephant" Debate](#): "For years now, protests and petitions have been calling for the relocation of the Valley Zoo's elephants. In early 2009, celebrity show-host, and prominent animal welfare advocate, Bob Barker, joined the campaign and along with Zoocheck Canada, offered to fly experts in elephant medicine up to Edmonton at no charge. In addition, there are standing offers for an all-expense paid transfer for Lucy to either The Elephant Sanctuary (TES) in Tennessee, or The Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) sanctuary in California. Despite all of the controversy, the City steadfastly refuses to relinquish Lucy and declines all outside offers of assistance."

A history of Lucy's life and a summary of efforts made on behalf of Lucy at the Edmonton Valley Zoo:

1975

Lucy was born in Sri Lanka. She came from Pinnawala Elephant Orphanage/elephant breeding center.

1977

Lucy arrived at Edmonton Valley Zoo (formerly known as Storyland Valley Zoo) at the age of 2. She was alone at the zoo for her first 12 years in Edmonton.

1986-1988

Lucy was sent to The Calgary Zoo twice, for 6 months each time, to be bred to their bull Bandera. The last time was 1988 – Bandera died in 1991 at age 16. Lucy was with the Calgary herd for two winters, which means she has lived with a small group of elephants in the past without problems.

1989

In lieu of Lucy having a calf, Samantha, a 1 year old female African elephant, captured in Zimbabwe, was brought in for Lucy to mother. They are different species – but small zoos at the time liked to have one of each species, even though their behaviour and temperaments are different and they would never meet in the wild.

Lucy started to develop foot problems.

Since 1989

Lucy has suffered from foot infections, including puss-filled, bleeding abscesses on her feet. Foot infections are a leading cause of death in captive elephants. Foot problems are caused by standing on hard surfaces in their own waste, obesity, lack of exercise and cold, damp conditions

1991

Lucy was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Arthritis is a common and serious ailment for elephants confined in zoos. It can be made worse by lack of exercise, obesity, standing on hard earth or concrete floors and cool, damp conditions. Wild elephants are not known to suffer from arthritis.

2004

Lucy started displaying breathing problems such as wheezing, gurgling in her trunk and open-mouth breathing. The zoo still has not provided a diagnosis – no treatment options have lessened the condition.

Lucy's health record indicates that she had a sharp object removed from a hole in a pad on her right foot.

2005

Discussions between animal welfare organizations Zoocheck and Voice for Animals (V4A) began about getting the elephants relocated. Zoocheck and V4A visited the zoo and took photos for the start of the campaign. Letters were sent to Edmonton City council and an action alert was initiated to generate letters from the public to city council.

2006

A meeting was held with city council to request that Lucy & Samantha be moved to a sanctuary and that the elephant exhibit be closed. An action alert was generated asking people to let city council know that they want the elephants moved. The end of Samantha's trunk was torn off when she was exploring a latch on a gate. A media release was issued to remind citizens of the plight of both elephants and the conditions at EVZ. Zoocheck commissioned an elephant expert to review and report on Canadian captive elephant enclosures and behaviour.

2007

A [26-page report](#) on Canadian elephants was written by [Winnie Kiiru, PhD](#). Regarding the EVZ, she reported that "The Edmonton Valley Zoo, in my opinion, is the most problematic due to its northern location and cold climate. Lucy and Samantha are both suffering from stereotypic behavior and Lucy shows signs of severe arthritis and possible foot problems. The City of Edmonton should take steps to move these 2 elephants to a more appropriate facility where they will have time to heal and can live in more healthy social groupings with other elephants"

An analysis was done to determine the amount of time both Lucy and Samantha are locked indoors and a media release was issued. Copies of the finalized expert report were sent to Edmonton Mayor and city council along with a letter requesting that the elephants be moved to a sanctuary – no response from council although it generated significant media interest. A meeting was held with a few city councillors who were sympathetic to Lucy's situation at which time they expressed concern for Lucy's ability to survive transfer as the zoo had convinced them she would not survive. Action alerts for letter writing, letters to the editor, information tables set-up by V4A throughout the city.

Zoocheck requested Lucy and Samantha's medical records via freedom of information and conducted a behavioural study of both elephants. The study revealed that both elephants were lethargic and exhibiting stereotypic behaviours. Lucy's companion Samantha, after 18 years of bonding, was sent away on a long-term breeding loan and has never returned. Lucy has remained alone ever since. In any case, today's zoo standards and the zoo's own plan preclude adding another elephant. The exhibit is too small and improvement costs would be very high.

Lucy's health record indicates that her keeper removed a 2 inch stick from a hole in her left front foot. Complaints were issued to the Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) regarding Lucy now residing alone and zoo vet states that Lucy cannot survive a move. EHS refuses to pursue the matter any further. Letters were written to Canadian Aquariums and Zoos (CAZA) regarding the same and they refused to act stating the zoo assured them Lucy was doing fine.

Lucy's medical records were sent to 2 elephant veterinarians in the US to offer an opinion on Lucy's condition and if it was safe to move her. Vets advise that there is no evidence to support EVZ's claim that Lucy was too sick to be moved.

2008

V4A holds several protests at City Hall to remind the public that Lucy is languishing all alone.

Zoocheck hired a professional photographer to document Lucy's conditions which were highlighted in a photo report. Zoocheck consults with lawyers in an attempt to seek legal avenues to help Lucy. Lucy was diagnosed with the early stages of colic in August. Colic is a digestive system disease that can be very painful.

2009

In early 2009, celebrity game show host and prominent animal welfare advocate, [Bob Barker](#) joined the campaign and along with Zoocheck Canada, offered to fly in renowned veterinary elephant experts to Edmonton at no charge to the city or zoo. In addition, there are standing offers that remain today for an all expense paid transfer for Lucy to either The Elephant Sanctuary (TES) in Tennessee, or The Performing Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) sanctuary in California.

Other animal welfare organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and In Defense of Animals (IDA) joined the fight to have Lucy sent to sanctuary.

Bob Barker, Dr. Joyce Poole (founder of ElephantVoices and a world-renowned elephant researcher), and PAWS co-founder Ed Stewart all visited the Valley Zoo to see Lucy and meet with the zoo's executives to try and convince them to send Lucy to PAWS. Bob and Joyce both appear and speak in this [video](#).

PETA enlisted the help of William Shatner who wrote to city council and NHL hockey player Georges Laracque offered \$100,000 to cover costs associated with relocating Lucy.

Thousands of letters were sent to EHS and ESRD regarding violations of the Alberta Zoo Standards. Local veterinarian Debi Zimmermann, wrote a report entitled [One Veterinarian's Search For The Truth in the Lucy the Elephant Debate](#). She summarized: "It has been well documented that the leading cause of a premature death in captive elephants are chronic infections (especially of the feet), followed closely by obesity, circulatory issues and chronic stress. All of these health issues can be related directly to inadequately addressing the complex ecological, social, behavioral and physiological needs of these animals in a captive situation. Lucy's serious health issues are therefore the quintessential reason why she should be moved. Her age, as well as the severity and chronicity of her diseases, command urgency in this action."

Voice for animals held rallies to free Lucy in July and September. Lucy had been having ongoing dental problems due to an impacted tooth. This kind of tooth condition is often due to an inappropriate diet. The tooth finally fell out in 2009.

It was also noted at this time that Lucy was grossly obese as a result of her inactivity. The extra weight can aggravate her arthritis and foot problems causing increased pain. A [welfare study of Lucy](#) was undertaken by Asian elephant scientist Sarendra Varma which indicated that Lucy's score was a dismal 3.1 out of 10.

In addition, it was noted that Lucy was frequently displaying abnormal stereotypic behaviours. Lucy spends most of her time inactive as opposed to normal elephants who remain active up to 20 hours a day. Lucy demonstrates 2 kinds of stereotypies: rocking and stepping back and forth. These types of activities indicate an abnormal interaction between Lucy and her environment.

2010

Zoocheck, PETA and Edmonton resident/President of the Voice For Animals Humane Society named Tove Reece, all joined forces to [file a lawsuit on Lucy's behalf](#). Although the case was not won, it was appealed to Alberta's Supreme Court where 2 of the 3 justices decided against it. The judge in support of the appeal, Chief Justice Catherine Fraser wrote an insightful dissent which could be a turning point in animal welfare law in Canada. For the first time, a Canadian judge has treated an animal like the individual that she is, deserving of consideration, compassion, and protection. It was then appealed to Canada's Supreme Court which refused to hear it.

Voice for Animals held a protest at the entrance to The Edmonton Valley Zoo

In Defense of Animals published their annual list of Worst Zoos for Elephants, the Edmonton Valley Zoo ranked #2.

2011

Voice for Animals held a Free Lucy protest in October at the Edmonton Valley Zoo In Defense of Animals published their annual list of Worst Zoos for Elephants, the Edmonton Valley Zoo ranked #1

2012

Voice for Animals in conjunction with PETA, were granted permission by Paul McCartney to set-up an information table about Lucy during his concert at Rexall Place in Edmonton. In Defense of Animals published their annual Worst Zoos for Elephants list, the Edmonton Valley Zoo ranked #1

The Fifth Estate aired an excellent documentary series called Elephants in Zoos. Lucy was profiled in part 4. It was an excellent summation of the issues and the people involved. Since the video aired Lucy's long time vet Milton Ness passed away as well as Mel Richardson from PAWS Sanctuary.

2013

Lucy was examined by Dr. James Oosterhuis who was a paid consultant hired by EVZ. He reported that Lucy's respiratory problem precludes her from being placed in any stressful situation such as putting her through the rigors of being moved to another facility. Voice for Animals held a Free Lucy protest on Family Day which included a blockade at the entrance to The Edmonton Valley Zoo. 2 more protests were held in the summer of 2013.

MacLeans magazine published an article by Barbara Amiel called [The Shame of Zoos](#) that featured Lucy's plight.

Voice for Animals held a special screening of the film An Apology to Elephants at the Metro Cinema in Edmonton. Personal invitations were given to all mayoral and city council candidates who were running in the upcoming election.

In Defense of Animals published their annual list of Worst Zoos for Elephants, the Edmonton Valley Zoo ranked #2. A new mayor and city council were elected in October which brought new hope for Lucy but sadly they seem no more willing to help Lucy than the previous council. 2014 In Defense of Animals published their annual list of Worst Zoos for Elephants, the Edmonton Valley Zoo was the "Hall of Shame" winner.

2014

Lucy is featured in a book written by Rob Laidlaw entitled 5 Elephants.

The Toronto Zoo after a long fought battle, sent their elephants to PAWS Sanctuary in California. The Fifth Estate aired an excellent documentary about their transfer which also highlighted Lucy. Bob Barker speaks out yet again for her in this program. [Video.](#)

The [Calgary elephants were also relocated](#) in May 2014 to the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, DC for a better climate and more space. This left Lucy as the only elephant left in a Canadian City owned zoo.

2015

In January, following the release of the 2014 Worst Zoos for Elephants list, EVZ was the "Hall of Shame" winner, numerous media outlets cover the story. This sets off a new wave of international attention for Lucy.

Due to the generosity of North Americans, funds were collected to have a custom coat manufactured for Lucy. The coat was delivered as an early Valentine's Day gift. Within hours of receiving the coat, the zoo stated publicly that they would not use the coat for Lucy as she did not require it and would be donating it to a sanctuary in Asia or Africa. This set off a media firestorm with many media outlets reporting how the zoo denied this gift for Lucy from well meaning people. Many people from all over the world expressed their disgust with the callous actions of the zoo with thousands of likes and comments on social media.

New local advocacy group, Lucy's Edmonton Advocates' Project (LEAP) was being formed to focus their efforts solely on Lucy and to educate citizens and politicians in an informative and friendly manner.

New photos were obtained in February by long time advocates — now organizing LEAP — as well as video footage. They depict Lucy being walked on the grounds of the zoo by keepers holding bullhooks on a cold winter day of -15 C. This video was shared widely.

There was also footage of a depressed looking Lucy inside her tiny concrete barn.

An article from The Friends of Lucy was submitted and published on [The Dodo](#) website and Facebook page. The same article was later shared on the Huffington Post garnering thousands of likes and comments.

LEAP's first campaign meeting was held in April and a fundraising campaign was quickly underway and new informational brochures, campaign t-shirts and other promotional materials were created.

The first LEAP tabling event was held on May 9th. Advocates engaged citizens on a busy sidewalk distributing Save Lucy stickers, brochures and temporary tattoos to interested visitors. Several people signed up to learn more about Lucy and to join the local team.

A friendly demonstration was held on May 24th at the EVZ to recognize the unfortunate 38th anniversary of Lucy's captivity in Edmonton. There were close to 30 attendees, adults and children who wore their campaign t-shirts, carried placards and banners, chanted informative rhymes for the visiting public and there was an elephant mascot to entertain the children.

On June 6th, a second tabling event called Pride For Lucy was held in conjunction with the Pride parade. It was a huge success with LEAP members engaging hundreds of parade goers and distributing nearly 800 brochures as well as Save Lucy bracelets, tattoos, stickers. Local, provincial and federal politicians attended the event and Alberta's Premier Rachel Notley even stopped by the LEAP booth for a photo-op and accepted some informational materials about Lucy.

On June 20th, another tabling event was held and on the 28th another demonstration was held at EVZ to recognize the International Day of Action for Elephants. This event was initiated by the international organization In Defense of Animals (IDA) as part of their International Day of Action for Elephants in Zoos (IDAEZ). IDA organized three simultaneous demonstrations on this date for the three solitary elephants in North America including Lucy in Edmonton, Lucky at the San Antonio Zoo and Asha in Roanoke, VA. Lucy's demonstration was a combined effort by Voice for Animals, LEAP and Friends of Lucy. A few local TV and radio media outlets provided coverage and despite record breaking heat in Edmonton, there were dozens of supporters in attendance.

Fourth and fifth tabling events were held in July as well as an interactive education session presented by The Elephant Sanctuary (TES) in Tennessee. This is one of 2 possible sanctuaries that Lucy could go to should she be allowed to retire. It was held in Edmonton and was hosted by LEAP. A few dozen Edmontonians were in attendance for this engaging program which included:

- Live 2-way discussion with sanctuary staff.
- An introduction to the sanctuary elephants utilizing photos, video and slides.
- Information about the daily life of the sanctuary elephants and elephants in the wild.
- A staff guided tour of TES using live streaming Ele-cams.

In August, on World Elephant Day, another demonstration was organized by LEAP and held at Edmonton City Hall. The event was a huge success, garnering much media attention and an excellent turnout despite record setting hot temperatures in Edmonton. This is the first time that a demo for Lucy has taken place at Edmonton City Hall, at the doorstep of the decision-makers in Edmonton: Mayor Don Iveson and the City Council. They ultimately have the power to facilitate the unbiased, independent vet exam and health assessment that advocates are asking for.

LEAP decided to move their Lucy booth to the downtown core in Edmonton and held 2 more tabling events in August and September in the Edmonton City Hall area.

A children's education session was hosted by LEAP and presented by The Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. 50 elementary school aged children attended this live event where they learned about elephants, what they eat, the differences between African and Asian elephants and how elephants come to live in sanctuaries. They were able to observe the elephants on live-cams and ask questions directly to sanctuary staff. Children in attendance were given Lucy activity books, stickers and tattoos.

In August and September, a call to action was put out to Lucy's advocates to join in an aggressive letter writing campaign to both the Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) and to the Alberta Minister of Environment. We are pressuring the EHS to investigate animal cruelty related to Lucy's isolation, her enclosure, the potentially injurious climate and lack of required exercise. We would like the Minister of Environment to enforce the Alberta zoo standards which EVZ is currently in violation of. Hundreds of letters and follow-up letters were sent from all over the world.

In November a demonstration was held on the steps of the office of Environment Minister Shannon Phillips. Participants gathered to urge the minister to not renew the Valley Zoo's operating permit and finally enforce the zoo standards. The Edmonton Valley zoo is in violation of numerous Alberta Zoo Standards with regard to the Animal Protection Act and Public Safety Standards.

2016

January – A children's advocate video was filmed which included several children discussing Lucy's suffering secondary to her captivity at the Edmonton Valley Zoo

In Defense of Animals published their annual worst zoos for elephants list. [The Edmonton Valley Zoo was listed again for the 6th year in a row](#) and was given dishonorable mention. Many local media outlets covered the story and it garnered a lot of comments online regarding Lucy's plight.

March – A few members of LEAP went to Thailand and Sri Lanka and footage was obtained to create 3 new videos for Lucy's campaign. One entitled Can Lucy Be Moved To a Sanctuary is filmed in Thailand at Elephant Nature Park.

Another video Lucy's Former Life was filmed in Sri Lanka, Lucy's homeland and shows the incredible bond between Asian elephants in the region where Lucy was taken from.

A third video, Leap talks with Lek Chailert at ENP was also filmed on site at Elephant Nature Park in Thailand. The video features the owner and founder of the sanctuary Lek, sharing her experiences with rescuing older elephants and how poorly they tolerate the cold, even in Thailand on cool evenings.

An online petition was started for Lucy on the Care2 website and within 2 weeks had gained well over 200,000 signatures.

Another demonstration was held on the steps of Minister Shannon Phillips doorstep on March 29th, leading up to the annual permit renewal on April 1st. Attendees again were urging the minister to not grant a zoo permit to the Edmonton Valley Zoo in light of all the Alberta Zoo Standard Violations with regards to Lucy. Following the demonstration advocates marched to the steps of the Alberta Legislature Building and hand delivered copies of the recent petitions that had garnered over 230,000 signatures. Photos of the demonstration can be seen [here](#).

Acclaimed film director and producer Sangita Iyer heard about Lucy's plight and sent a letter to Environment Minister Phillips. Details can be found [here](#). Sangita also wrote an article on behalf of Lucy for the [Huffington Post](#).

Friends of Lucy compiled [photographic evidence](#) of public safety violations at the Edmonton Valley Zoo. This information was forwarded to the offices of Alberta Environment & Parks who are responsible for upholding zoo standards.

April – LEAP kicked off their 2016 public education campaign by holding a tabling event on April 30rd. Members were out engaging the public and sharing educational materials regarding Lucy.

May – LEAP held a candlelight vigil at The Edmonton Valley Zoo to commemorate Lucy's 39th anniversary of her arrival in Edmonton. Members braved a cold and blustery day to light candles in honour of Lucy and to read haikus created by a longtime Lucy advocate.

Lucy's supporters joined in around the world to light a candle for Lucy and submitted photos that were compiled into this [video](#).

Following the vigil, members made their way to a busy Edmonton overpass to hold their first Save Lucy Light Brigade. This was a never-before done event in Edmonton that garnered attention of a local newspaper that sent out a photo on Instagram. 2 sets of brilliant LED signs were created for the event that read SAVE LUCY. These were displayed over both directions of freeway traffic which garnered honks of support from freeway commuters. [Live video of the event was streamed on Facebook.](#)

June – LEAP held their second annual Pride for Lucy tabling event during Edmonton's Gay Pride Parade and kicked off their new campaign to Boycott the Edmonton Valley Zoo.

It was a busy day and members reached out to parade goers to educate them about Lucy and to collect signatures for the new [#BoycottEVZ](#) campaign. A paper petition was created for Albertans to sign and an online pledge petition was generated through Change.org. Buttons were designed to hand out at tabling events and were sent around the world to those that signed the online petition. Photos of people from around the world wearing the buttons were posted and compiled into an album. The online petition can be found [here](#). Following tabling LEAP members held their 2nd Save Lucy Light Brigade on the Whitemud Freeway Overpass.

July & August – In July a report was released from a UK veterinarian Jon Cracknell. He was brought in by CAZA (Canadian Zoos and Aquariums) to assess Lucy to determine if the zoo should be granted a variance from the zoo standards which prohibits keeping an elephant alone. Interestingly, Dr. Cracknell was in charge of the Longleat Zoo who also keeps Asian elephant Anne alone. It was no surprise that he concurred with the Valley Zoo consultant Dr. James Oosterhuis who stated Lucy should remain in Edmonton. This was CAZA's effort to address criticism that the decision to keep Lucy in Edmonton was only based on one biased veterinarian who was hired by EVZ. Unfortunately, it did not adequately address that issue as Dr. Cracknell could also be considered to be biased as he is a zoo vet, not a species expert and clearly condones solitary elephants kept in a zoo environment. Some positive points from the report were summarized by LEAP in this post. The Globe and Mail reported on this development as well. Both can be seen [here](#).

September – 2 more tabling events for Lucy in conjunction with the Edmonton Global March for Elephants and Rhinos. [Leap admins organized the local Global March](#) and

many of Lucy's dedicated advocates came out to march against poaching and the illegal wildlife trade in ivory and rhino horn.

2 more Take The Lucy Pledge tabling events were held followed by LEAP's [3rd light brigade](#) in August to commemorate World Elephant Day.

Zoocheck and Voice for Animals launched new legal action against the Alberta Government for allowing the ongoing violations to the Alberta Zoo standards. The violations include keeping Lucy alone and not in an appropriate social grouping as outlined in the AB Zoo Standards. In addition, Lucy's enclosure size and public safety issues resulting from the Valley Zoo's free contact management — which allows Lucy to be in close contact with zoo visitors — were also included. The media release and the court affidavits from experts can be seen [here](#).

October – Another tabling event was held in a new Farmer's Market venue and LEAP's 2nd Online Fundraising Auction was held. This year's auction partnered with the documentary film maker Sangita Iyer and her award winning film Gods in Shackles. 50% of the proceeds were donated to Voice for Elephants foundation that funded Ms. Iyer's film.

December – 3 LEAP members visited Lucy to obtain photo and video evidence of Lucy's condition. Lucy was observed to appear frightened to walk on the icy roadways and appeared to be having more difficulty walking than the last time she was recorded. [Photos and video can be seen here.](#)

2017

IDA released their annual worst zoos list for 2016. The Edmonton Valley Zoo was ranked as the 4th worse zoo for elephants in N. America. Many local news outlets as well as The Globe and Mail reported on this. [The report can be found here.](#)

Upcoming Campaign Plans

January 31 – LEAP admins Sam Whincup and Mary-Ann Holm do a live radio show broadcast about Lucy. TS Radio Voices Carry for Animals with Debbie Dahmer.

February 6th – LEAP members go to a public hearing city council meeting at Edmonton City Hall. See the event page for dates and times. of future city council events.

February 22nd - LEAP members attend second city council meeting to remind them we are not going away.

March 20th – LEAP members attend 3rd city council meeting.