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Zoo might lose elephants

4 pachyderms could be shipped out over \$ shortage

By **GLORIA CAMPISI**
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The pachyderms may be packing it in at the Philadelphia Zoo.

Zoo officials could scrap plans for a costly new elephant exhibit within weeks, and decide to send away the zoo's herd.

But that decision would have nothing to do with a recent clash between two of the pachyderms that may have blinded the right eye of one of them, they said.

Dulary, 41, the zoo's only Asian elephant and the matriarch of the four-elephant herd, suffered a cut on her eyelid in a shoving match with a younger African elephant, Bette, Aug. 30.

Dulary had surgery on the eyelid, apparently injured by Bette's tusk, and was given antibiotics.

She has been isolated and now is being treated for a corneal ulcer, said Dr. Jill Beech, a University of Pennsylvania veterinarian. Beech said she "wouldn't be optimistic" that Dulary will see again out of the injured eye.

If the zoo's board of directors decides not to build a new, 2.5- acre savanna to replace the 1940s-era quarter-acre elephant quarters, all four of its elephants could be sent elsewhere, according to Dr. Andrew Baker, who oversees animal care at the zoo.

"We would love to keep elephants here at the zoo," Baker said, but the decision is "purely financial."

Baker said it was far too early to say what would happen.

The two younger African elephants, integrated into the zoo herd a year-and-a-half ago, could be sent to breeding programs at other zoos.

Dulary and another older elephant, Petal, 49, could be sent to other zoos, or possibly, a sanctuary, Baker said.

He challenged animal activists' claims that Dulary's injury had been caused by the animals' being housed too closely together or because Dulary had been housed with African elephants, which have different temperaments.

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Baker said Dulary had lived with Petal, an African elephant, almost all her life without problems.

"With any animals that live in a social group, conflicts occur," he said.

"We don't know exactly what was going through the elephants' minds, but it was probably not a dominance struggle. Bette was the lowest in the dominance hierarchy," he said.

Baker likened the tussle to "two kids wrestling on the playground. Ninety-nine times out of 100, there's no problem."

The savanna is one of three major projects planned as part of a \$100-million upgrade at the zoo, which opened in 1874 and is America's oldest.

The others are a new aviary to replace the badly deteriorating birdhouse and a new children's zoo, a major attraction.

Peter G. Gould, board chairman, said a significant amount of money had been raised for the aviary and the children's zoo but little for the elephant project. He estimated costs of the projects at \$14 million to \$18 million apiece.

The zoo had layoffs in January and poor summer weather lowered attendance.

Pete Hoskins, zoo president, said the board's decision was expected at its Oct. 28 meeting or in November.

"It's going to happen again," said animal activist Rowan Morrison of Friends of the Philly Zoo Elephants, of Dulary's injury. Even the new savanna is "not nearly enough" room, she said.

"Zoos are still reluctant to move out their most popular exhibit, the elephants," said Carol Buckley, who runs an elephant sanctuary in Tennessee.

"Elephants play a huge role in public education and conservation," said a spokeswoman for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, which is "supportive" of the Philadelphia Zoo.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, which oversees zoo animals, visited the zoo after Dulary's injury and found it had acted properly.



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