



# VETERINARY VISIT REPORT

## Specialist Elephant Veterinary Care

### Visiting Veterinary Team:

Dr. Imke Wienman – Veterinary (Germany)  
Dr. Ann-Kathrin Oerke – Veterinary (Germany)

### Location of Visit:

Stand Up 4 Elephants, Tiger Tops Elephant Camp  
Kawasoti-15, Nepal

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# Foreword

The health and welfare of elephants in human care depend on continuous learning, collaboration, and access to specialized veterinary support. The visit of Dr. Imke Wienman and Dr. Ann-Kathrin Oerke to Stand Up 4 Elephants and Tiger Tops Elephant Camp provided an important opportunity to conduct detailed health assessments while also strengthening local knowledge in elephant veterinary care.

Originally planned as a follow-up health examination for Eva, one of the elephants under the care of Stand Up 4 Elephants, the visit also allowed for broader veterinary assessments of elephants at Tiger Tops Elephant Camp. Through general health check-ups, blood testing, and ultrasound examinations, the veterinary team was able to contribute valuable insights into the health and reproductive status of several elephants.

Equally important was the opportunity for local veterinarians, caretakers, and volunteers to observe and participate in the procedures, encouraging knowledge exchange and capacity building. This collaboration reflects the shared commitment of Stand Up 4 Elephants and Tiger Tops to improving elephant welfare through responsible management, documentation, and professional veterinary support.



*This report documents the activities and observations from the visit and highlights the importance of continued collaboration in advancing elephant health and welfare in Nepal.*



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# Introduction

From 23rd to 27th February 2026, a specialist veterinary visit took place at Stand Up 4 Elephants and Tiger Tops Elephant Camp in Kawasoti-15, Nepal. The visiting veterinary team included Dr. Imke Wienman, a veterinary specialist in elephant reproductive health and an expert in ultrasound diagnostics, and Ann-Kathrin Oerke, a veterinary specialist in laboratory diagnostics and hormone analysis in elephants, both from Germany.

The visit was arranged through the collaboration between the founder of Stand Up 4 Elephants and the owner of Tiger Tops. Stand Up 4 Elephants has maintained contact with Dr. Imke for several years, particularly regarding the health of one of its elephants, Eva. Eva has experienced recurring abscesses and an unusual hormonal cycle, and Dr. Imke previously visited approximately four to five years ago to conduct an ultrasound examination on her.

As it was time for another comprehensive health check for Eva, the opportunity was also used to conduct veterinary assessments for the elephants at Tiger Tops Elephant Camp. This was particularly valuable in documenting and recording more detailed health and management information about the elephants of Tiger Tops.

During the visit, veterinary examinations were conducted on a total of fifteen elephants from both organizations. These included general health check-ups for all fifteen elephants, blood tests for twelve elephants, and ultrasound (USG) examinations for eight elephants. The ultrasound examinations were performed both rectally and externally depending on the individual elephant and the purpose of the examination.

In addition to the veterinary procedures, the visit also served as an opportunity for knowledge sharing and practical learning. Local veterinarians and volunteers were able to observe and participate in parts of the examinations, helping to strengthen local veterinary understanding of elephant health and reproductive monitoring.



# Visiting Veterinary & Support Team



From left to right: Dr. Imke Wiemann, Mr. Bal Krishna Giri and Dr. Ann-Katherin Oerke

The veterinary visit was led by **Dr. Imke Wienman**, a wildlife veterinarian from Germany specializing in elephant reproductive health and ultrasound diagnostics. Her work focuses on understanding and monitoring reproductive cycles in elephants through advanced ultrasound techniques, contributing to improved veterinary care and management of captive elephants. She has experience working with large mammals and has been involved in reproductive assessments and health monitoring in different elephant care settings.

Accompanying her was **Dr. Ann-Kathrin Oerke**, a Germany-based veterinary specialist in laboratory diagnostics and hormone analysis. Both professionals are internationally recognized for their work in elephant health, reproductive monitoring, and scientific approaches to veterinary care.

Dr. Wienman has previously worked with Stand Up 4 Elephants and visited several years earlier to conduct an ultrasound examination on Eva. Since then, she has remained in contact with the organization and has continued to provide guidance regarding Eva's reproductive health.

Dr. Ann-Kathrin Oerke works in the field of endocrinology, focusing on reproductive and stress-related hormones in elephants. Stand Up 4 Elephants regularly collects urine samples from its elephants, Eva and Lhamo, which are sent to her laboratory for hormone analysis, including progesterone monitoring. This ongoing collaboration supports long-term tracking of the elephants' reproductive cycles and hormonal health.

The visiting team was supported locally by **Mr. Bal Krishna Giri**, a veterinary technician from Nepal who serves as the primary veterinary professional for the elephants at Tiger Tops Elephant Camp. With extensive knowledge of the medical history and management of these elephants, he played an important role during the visit, assisting with the preparation of equipment, handling of elephants, and coordination of procedures.

Throughout the visit, the team also worked closely with elephant caretakers, local veterinarians, and volunteers, whose support was essential in carrying out the examinations and ensuring the smooth coordination of all veterinary activities.

# Objectives of the visit



The main objectives of the veterinary visit were:

- **Follow-up health examination of Eva:**

To conduct a detailed veterinary check-up of Eva, one of the elephants at Stand Up 4 Elephants, with special attention to her reproductive health, irregular hormonal cycles, and overall condition.

- **General health assessments of the elephants:**

To carry out physical examinations of the elephants at Tiger Tops Elephant Camp and Stand Up 4 Elephants in order to better understand and document their health status.

- **Diagnostic procedures:**

To perform blood collection and ultrasound (USG) examinations on selected elephants to assess their internal health and reproductive condition.

- **Support ongoing reproductive monitoring:**

To continue collaboration on hormone monitoring through urine sample analysis for the elephants at Stand Up 4 Elephants, helping track their reproductive cycles and hormonal patterns.

- **Knowledge sharing and practical learning:**

To provide an opportunity for local veterinarians, elephant caretakers, and volunteers to observe and assist during veterinary procedures, strengthening local capacity in elephant health care and monitoring.

**“This visit aimed to combine clinical care, reproductive monitoring, and knowledge sharing to strengthen long-term elephant health and welfare.”**

# Veterinary Activities Conducted

The veterinary visit from 23rd to 27th February 2026 at Stand Up 4 Elephants and Tiger Tops Elephant Camp combined direct clinical care, diagnostic procedures, reproductive monitoring, and capacity-building activities. All activities were carefully designed to ensure high standards of elephant welfare while providing hands-on learning opportunities for local veterinarians, caretakers, and volunteers.

## 1. General Health Examinations

Comprehensive physical examinations were conducted on all fifteen elephants, including assessment of body condition, skin and foot health, oral cavity, and mobility. Behavioral observations were also recorded to evaluate overall health and welfare. All findings were documented to update the elephants' individual health records and support longitudinal monitoring.

## 2. Blood Collection and Laboratory Analysis

Blood samples were collected from twelve elephants for laboratory analysis, including complete blood count (CBC), serum biochemistry, and hormone evaluation. Strict animal welfare protocols were observed to minimize stress, with careful handling and monitoring during sample collection. Samples were processed according to standard laboratory procedures to ensure accuracy and reliability of results.

## 3. Ultrasound (USG) Examinations

Eight elephants underwent ultrasound examinations to assess internal health and reproductive status. Both rectal and external ultrasound techniques were used depending on the purpose of the examination. Eva received a detailed reproductive ultrasound to investigate previous reproductive concerns and irregular hormonal cycles. Images and measurements were carefully recorded to track changes over time and guide future reproductive monitoring.

## 4. Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

The visit also served as a practical learning opportunity for local veterinarians, students, and elephant caretakers. Participants observed and assisted in examinations, sample collection, and ultrasound procedures, contributing to strengthened local capacity in elephant veterinary care.

Observation and hands-on participation included:

- Clinical examination techniques
- Safe handling and restraint procedures
- Blood sample collection
- Ultrasound imaging
- Data recording and documentation

## 5. Coordination with Sanctuary Operations

All veterinary activities were carried out in coordination with daily husbandry practices to ensure minimal disruption to the elephants. Findings were documented to support ongoing health monitoring and management.

# Elephant Health Observations

Overall, the elephants assessed during the visit were found to be in generally stable health, with no immediate life-threatening conditions observed. However, several common health patterns and individual concerns were identified, highlighting the importance of continued monitoring and targeted care.

## 1. General Health and Body Condition

Most elephants presented with **adequate to good body condition**, indicating appropriate nutrition and overall management. Skin condition was generally satisfactory, with only minor issues such as superficial abrasions and localized dryness observed in some individuals.

Foot health was largely stable, although routine foot care remains essential to prevent long-term complications.

## 2. Musculoskeletal and Mobility Observations

The majority of elephants showed **normal movement and mobility**. Some individuals displayed mild stiffness or uneven gait, likely associated with age, previous workload, or chronic conditions. These cases require ongoing observation and supportive management.

## 3. Internal Health and Clinical Findings

Blood sampling and ultrasound examinations did not indicate any widespread systemic illness among the group. The findings contributed to establishing baseline health parameters for future comparison and monitoring.

## 4. Reproductive Health Observations

Ultrasound examinations provided valuable insight into the reproductive status of several elephants. Variations in ovarian activity and reproductive condition were noted among individuals, emphasizing the importance of continued reproductive monitoring.

Eva, in particular, showed findings consistent with her history of irregular hormonal cycles. Detailed ultrasound assessment was conducted to better understand her reproductive condition and guide future monitoring.

## 5. Individual Health Concerns

A small number of elephants presented with **minor, individual-specific health issues**, including:

- Localized skin conditions
- Mild musculoskeletal irregularities
- Previous or recurring conditions requiring follow-up

None of these were assessed as critical during the visit, but they highlight the need for continued veterinary attention and record-keeping.



Photos by Quentin Meyer

## Knowledge Sharing and Training

A key component of the veterinary visit was its strong focus on knowledge exchange and capacity building, significantly enhancing local expertise in elephant health care. Local veterinarians, veterinary students, and elephant caretakers actively participated throughout the visit, with approximately ten professionals involved in observation and hands-on learning. Under the guidance of the visiting specialists, participants engaged in clinical procedures including general health examinations, blood collection, and ultrasound diagnostics.

This direct involvement provided practical exposure to:

- Elephant-specific examination and handling techniques
- Safe and effective sample collection methods
- Application of ultrasound in reproductive assessment
- Systematic documentation and health monitoring practices

Beyond observation, the visit strengthened confidence and technical capacity among local professionals, particularly in the use of diagnostic tools such as ultrasound, which remain limited in elephant practice in Nepal.

Overall, the visit contributed to building a stronger foundation for ongoing, locally led veterinary care and long-term health monitoring, reducing reliance on external expertise and supporting sustainable improvements in elephant welfare.

# Key Findings, Recommendations & Conclusion

## Key Findings

The veterinary visit provided a valuable opportunity to assess the **overall health and management practices** of elephants at both facilities through a collaborative approach. Elephants at **Tiger Tops Elephant Camp**, which hosts a larger group, were found to be in **generally stable condition**, with most individuals showing satisfactory body condition, foot health, and mobility. Some age-related challenges were observed, particularly among geriatric females, including digestive inefficiencies and mild musculoskeletal issues, highlighting the need for continued adaptive care.

At Stand Up 4 Elephants, Eva's assessment remained a key focus. While her condition continues to reflect ongoing **reproductive irregularities** requiring monitoring, the veterinary team noted a **clear improvement in her overall general condition compared to the previous visit**.

The visit also highlighted the **positive transition toward improved housing systems**, particularly the use of paddock-based management. At the same time, it identified opportunities to further strengthen **social grouping and family integration**, especially within the Tiger Tops population.

## Recommendations

- Continue strengthening **collaborative veterinary planning and regular monitoring** across both sites.
- Adapt management strategies for **aging elephants**, particularly in feeding and mobility support.
- Maintain and expand **paddock-based housing**, while gradually supporting **natural social groupings**, especially family units.
- Ensure **preparedness and consistency in routine care practices**, including foot care and daily health observation.
- Encourage **ongoing collaboration with visiting specialists**, alongside continued capacity building for local teams.

## Conclusion

The February 2026 veterinary visit highlighted the importance of **collaboration, knowledge sharing, and coordinated care** in maintaining and improving elephant welfare. Both Stand Up 4 Elephants and Tiger Tops Elephant Camp demonstrated a strong foundation in elephant management, with a clear commitment to continued improvement. The visit not only supported clinical assessment but also **strengthened teamwork between local staff and international specialists**, contributing to more informed and consistent care practices. The practices observed during the visit, particularly in record keeping and social management, reflect approaches that can support the continued development of elephant welfare standards.

Moving forward, **continued collaboration, proactive planning, and investment in both people and management systems will be key to ensuring sustainable, long-term improvements** in elephant health and welfare.



Highlights from the February 2026 Veterinary visit in action: examinations, training, and collaborative elephant care.



# PHOTOS



The SU4E team with visiting veterinary specialists, February 2026: celebrating collaboration and shared commitment to elephant welfare.