



Elephant Veterinary Training Course

www.elephantconservationcenter.com/ecore/



Who Should Attend

Our comprehensive, six-day veterinary course offers participants an overview of elephant conservation medicine.

- This course is oriented to 4th and 5th-year veterinary students and recent graduates with some clinical experience.
- Other graduates or veterinary students are welcome to apply, but priority enrollment will be granted to the category aforementioned.
- The course is limited to 15 students (with a minimum of 10) and will be taught in English.
- Participants must be fit and able to work safely in hot field conditions. Bending, walking, hiking, and getting dirty are required. Some field work involves trekking along trails to remote forest locations that can be muddy and steep at times.



Smithsonian Conservation
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ASIAN ELEPHANT
SUPPORT



Elephant Veterinary Training Course

ECORE Program – Elephant Conservation Center (ECC), Laos

Learn where elephant healthcare, welfare and conservation meet.

6-day intensive in-situ clinical & lab training on Asian elephant medicine.

Learn from our team of Asian elephant experts!

Our comprehensive, six-day veterinary course offers participants an overview of elephant conservation medicine. It is specifically oriented to 4th and 5th-year veterinary students and recent graduates with some clinical experience who are interested in learning about elephant conservation medicine with a focus on Asian elephants. However, all applications will be considered, even if applicants do not fall into any of the aforementioned categories..

Designed by a global team of practicing elephant veterinarians, biologists, scientists, and conservationists, it will take place at the Elephant Conservation Center (ECC) in Sayaboury, Laos.

The ECC/ECORE Institute is a nature-lover's paradise and an ideal place to learn about elephants. Situated on the serene banks of Nam Tien Lake, it is home to 27 rescued Asian elephants and their mahouts. The Elephant Hospital, protected contact wall, a well-equipped clinical laboratory, indoor and outdoor classrooms, 540 hectares of forest habitat, hiking trails, and viewing platforms create the perfect setting for learning. On-site lodging and meals and round-trip transportation to/from Luang Prabang make for an exciting and logistically easy experience for students traveling to Laos.

In this course, a wide range of topics will be explored through lectures, hospital and lab instruction, hands-on-practice of healthcare techniques, field work, forest excursions, and group participation activities.

On-site lodging and shuttle transport to/from Luang Prabang make for an immersive and logistically smooth experience. This unique setting allows learners to apply skills immediately in a functional elephant project, rather than just in a classroom or zoo.

Please join us in Laos!

2026 Session:

■ 7 - 12 December 2026

To book your place or for more information, please visit:

<https://www.elephantconservationcenter.com/ecore/>

Email: ecore@elephantconservationcenter.com

Phone: +856 20 99 545 253



Dr. Anabel López Pérez

PhD, Chiang Mai University

Member, IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group

Fellow Alumni Smithsonian Biology Conservation Institute

International Board of Advisor, Elephant Care International

Vetcare Course at the ECOPE Institute



Course Teachers



Susan Mikota

PhD, Head of Education & Research, Elephant Care International

Dr. Susan Mikota is Co-Founder and Director of Veterinary Programs and Research at Elephant Care International, a nonprofit focused on elephant health, welfare, and conservation. She has authored numerous scientific articles and the textbook *Biology, Medicine, and Surgery of Elephants*. She has worked across Asia, received a Guggenheim Fellowship, became board certified in Animal Welfare in 2017, and serves with the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group and Michigan State University.



Janine L. Brown

Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute

PhD, Research Physiologist, Endocrinology Laboratory Head

Janine Brown is a research physiologist and leads the endocrinology laboratory at the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute. Her work advances conservation through research on behavior, reproduction, and stress in endangered species. She oversees one of the world's leading wildlife endocrinology labs and is a global expert in elephant reproductive biology, supporting management programs for Asian and African elephants in the U.S. and range countries including Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.



Anabel Lopez Perez

PhD, Head of Education & Research

Anabel joined the ECC at its inception and has been central to its work ever since. Her enthusiasm is contagious. Initially focused on reducing human–elephant interactions, she developed herding protocols that now underpin our rewilding programme. A biologist new to Asian elephants on arriving in Laos, she is now a recognised behaviour expert collaborating with institutions including the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, Elephant Care International and the IUCN Asian Elephant Specialist Group, and earned a PhD from Chiang Mai University in 2025.

Course Teachers



Moukthida Vilasith

DVM, Head Veterinarian

Moukthida “Mouk” Vilasith is a wildlife veterinarian at the Elephant Conservation Center in Sayaboury, supporting its breeding, rewilding, and veterinary programmes. She has trained with institutions including the Denver Zoo and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, developing skills in laboratory and fieldwork. Alongside her clinical role, she contributes to youth education across Laos and represents ECC at events organised by Econox and the Anoulak Association.



Pavina Chaleungsouk

DVM, Veterinarian

Pavina Chalernsouk is a wildlife veterinarian at the ECC, where she supports its breeding, rewilding, and veterinary programmes. Prior to joining ECC, she completed an internship at the Lao Conservation Trust for Wildlife in Vientiane, gaining hands-on experience working with a diverse range of wildlife species. Since arriving at ECC, Pavina has further developed her expertise through training with leading institutions, including the Denver Zoo and the Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute, strengthening her skills in both laboratory and fieldwork. In addition to her clinical responsibilities, she is actively involved in youth education initiatives across Laos and represents ECC at events organised by Econox and the Anoulak Association.



Kan Thissamone

Vet Technician

Kan worked for several years with ElefantAsia NGO as a veterinary technician, providing first aid to elephants injured on logging sites through mobile veterinary clinics. After the NGO's projects were autonomised in 2012, he joined the Elephant Conservation Center to help establish Laos' first Elephant Hospital. Today he oversees elephant nutrition, mahout coordination, and veterinary care, and is widely respected across the regional Asian elephant conservation community.

Course Objectives

Veterinary Clinical Competence:

- Build participants' general knowledge and skills in elephant-specific health assessment, diagnosis, and interventions.

Conservation Literacy:

- Ensure understanding of the socio-ecological context of Asian elephants (e.g., conflict issues, welfare in captivity, etc.) and the role of veterinarians in conservation programs.

Capacity Building:

- Strengthen local elephant healthcare leadership by generating support for Lao elephant veterinarians.

Learning & Skill Development Outcomes

- Perform clinical exams on Asian elephants, crucial for their health and welfare.
- Understand elephant herd structure, social roles, and leadership dynamics relevant to elephant management and welfare.
- Identify common diseases in elephants.
- Provide basic care for elephants.
- Understand the normal physiological parameters observed during clinical examinations.
- Safely participate in and assist with medical procedures on elephants in a field setting.
- Apply best-practice animal welfare, biosecurity, and personal safety protocols during veterinary work.
- Understand the conservation challenges of the Asian elephant in range countries.

Teaching Approach



Teaching Approach

Learning is highly experiential. Instruction combines concise lectures with extensive hands-on sessions. Attendees will spend significant time in the ECC hospital, labs, and field areas. We use:

Interactive Lectures/Seminars:

- Covering anatomy, physiology, disease pathophysiology, and management principles (with decision-tree protocols).

Workshops and Labs:

- Supervised practice of exams and diagnostics (e.g. blood draws, ultrasonography basics, microscopy, hoof trimming techniques).

Field Exercises:

- Observations of elephant social groups, supervised handling demonstrations (protected contact), and welfare assessments.

Case Rounds & Debriefs:

- Group discussions of real case examples to solidify clinical reasoning.

Throughout, emphasis is on “learn-by-doing” with expert guidance. Every participant will actively engage in practical tasks under the watch of ECC’s veterinarians and technicians, ensuring skills are gained safely.



Course Topics

6-Day Program

The course spans six consecutive days, blending theory and practice:

Elephant Biology, Critical Conservation Issues, and Welfare

- Introduction to elephants
- Elephant management in captivity
- Elephant welfare
- Implications of climate change for elephant welfare
- Challenges and rewards of international veterinary conservation work

Field Work:

- Safety working around elephants
- Positive Reinforcement Training demonstration
- Elephant welfare assessment

Elephant Health Assessment

- Elephant anatomy and physiology
- Signs of health and disease
- Diagnosis / diagnostic tools
- Physical exam of elephants
- Body condition scoring and estimating weight
- Administration of medication
- Training elephants for medical procedures

Field Work:

- Perform physical examination

Elephant Behavior

Field Work:

- Elephant observation in the forest



Elephant Diseases and Disorders

- Introduction of diseases and disorders
- Diagnosis and treatment of TB
- Elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV)
- GI disorders
- Foot problems and care/arthritis
- Parasites
- Wounds and wound care
- Eye problems

Field & Lab Work:

- Foot care
- Lab analysis (WBC, HCT, TP, parasites)

Elephant Breeding and Musth Management

- Female reproduction
- Musth and bull management
- Breeding management and socialization
- Birth and neonatal care

Learning Environment & Equipment

Training occurs on the ECC campus, providing a true “clinic plus research” environment.

Facilities and equipment include:

- Elephant Hospital:**
 - A protected-contact treatment area for clinical demonstrations, plus a mobile clinic unit for outreach.
- Laboratories:**
 - On-site clinical, endocrine, and genetic (DNA) labs for sample analysis and diagnostics. Participants perform real diagnostic tests under supervision.
- Field Facilities:**
 - Elephant ‘Crush’ (Stock) for direct observation and handling exercises.
- Ultrasound Machine:**
 - For reproductive exams and emergency evaluations (e.g. detecting pregnancy or fluid).
- Weighing & BCS tools:**
 - Measuring tapes, scales, and body condition scoring charts to compare both direct and estimated weight/condition assessments.
- Microscopy:**
 - Microscopes and blood analyzers for hematology and parasitology.
- Foot care:**
 - Hoof trimming tools and foot bath systems.
- Chemical restraint equipment:**
 - Although elephants will not be darted by participants, darting systems and anesthesia plans are reviewed in principle to illustrate immobilization decision-making.

All practical sessions are led by ECC veterinarians and technical staff, ensuring safety and providing real-time feedback on participants’ technique and reasoning.

Logistics & What's Included

The course fee covers the following for its full duration:

- Accommodation:** ■ On-site lodging in shared bunk-bed dormitories. Optional: Limited upgraded accommodations (private or shared single rooms) can be arranged at additional cost.
- Meals & Water:** ■ Three meals per day (breakfast, lunch, dinner) plus drinking water (vegetarian and vegan options are available.)
- Transportation:** ■ Round-trip transfers between Luang Prabang (nearest city) and ECC.
- Laboratory Access:** ■ Use of ECC diagnostic laboratory and core equipment for hands-on training sessions.
- Professional Supervision:** ■ Professional Supervision: All instruction and supervision by course instructors and ECC staff.
- Scholarship Support for Lao Vets** ■ Scholarship Support for Lao Veterinarian: A \$150 donation from the course fee will support internships, supplies, and workshop and course fees for Lao veterinary students.

What's Not Included?

- Airfare, vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, costs for optional accommodations (e.g., Forest House, Lakeside Bungalow, or Deluxe Lodge), and extra baggage.

Participants should bring standard field/veterinary attire, binoculars, a small field notebook, and their own PPE, if desired. Internet is limited on-site; please plan accordingly.

Health & Safety

Working with elephants carries risks; we mitigate these with strict protocols. All elephant handling during the course follows protected-contact guidelines. Safety briefings and emergency procedures (e.g. rescue plans) are reviewed at the start.



EEHV (Elephant Endotheliotropic Herpesvirus):

- EEHV-HD is a leading cause of hemorrhagic disease in young Asian elephants, with high mortality if untreated. We include EEHV awareness throughout the course: participants learn surveillance methods (e.g. regular trunk washes, PCR testing), early clinical signs, and emergency response protocols.

Tuberculosis (TB):

- *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* can infect elephants and is transmissible to humans. TB control is treated with a One Health mindset. We cover testing protocols (tuberculin skin tests, trunk wash cultures) and biosafety (respiratory protection during suspect cases). All participants receive training on infection control measures when working in elephant facilities.

(All infectious disease trainings reference current veterinary guidelines for Asian elephants.)



Conservation Impact & Internships



Local Capacity-Building

ECORE/ECC programs prioritize local capacity-building by providing internships, courses, and workshops to Lao veterinary students. Attendance at this six-day veterinary course will help provide scholarship support for these programs.

Our 6-day course is explicitly designed as a support mechanism: tuition and partner contributions are channeled into stipends and resource support for these internships. By attending, participants not only gain skills but also contribute to a sustainable cycle of training and empowerment for local elephant veterinarians and conservationists.



Tuition, Fees & Registration



Tuition & Fees

Tuition (USD per participant)

Participants	Fee (USD per person)
5 - 15 participants	\$2,489

(Not included: airfare, vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, and any costs for optional private housing or extra baggage.)

Registration & Contact

For more information and to apply, contact the ECOPE Program coordinators:

Email ■ ecore@elephantconservationcenter.com

Website ■ www.elephantconservationcenter.com/ecore
(registration form available online)

Application Deadline ■ 60 days before start of course

Applications require a brief veterinary CV and statement of interest.
Early application is re-commended due to limited class size.





Luang Prabang Visitor Center

Manthatoulat Road
(Mekong Riverside)

Ban Pakham, Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

lp@elephantconservationcenter.com

TEL: +856(0)20 96 59 06 65

Elephant Conservation Center

a Ecore Institute

Nam Tien Reservoir, Sayaboury District

Sayaboury Province, Lao PDR

ecore@elephantconservationcenter

Whatsapp: +856 20 99 545 253

www.elephantconservationcenter.com

Facebook: elephant conservation center

Instagram: #elephantconservationlaos

