

Miracle baby elephant makes public debut

March 14 2010



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The male calf, nicknamed Mr Shuffles by [zoo](#) staff, wobbled out from a barn into the elephant enclosure with its mother, Porntip, four days after amazing keepers with its remarkable survival.

"He's looking around and seeing the world," zoo elephant manager Gary Miller said of the 116 kilogram (255 pound) animal's short foray before the public.

"He's just excited to be alive."

Miller said the indications were the elephant would have no permanent problems despite being stuck in a position in the [womb](#) which experts considered would result in death to both mother and calf in the wild.

"Because of his compromised position as he came out and was born, we didn't know if he had brain damage from lack of oxygen from such a prolonged birth," he told reporters. "I'd say he's going to be 100 percent."

The baby elephant arrived on Wednesday morning, two days after zoo officials said they believed it had died in the womb.

They later said the animal may have fallen into the coma during the marathon nine-day labour which meant its heartbeat was not detected.

The zoo, which has been flooded with notes of sympathy when the calf was thought to have died, has called on the public to choose a name for the Asian elephant, the second born at Taronga as part of a breeding programme.

A herd was brought to Australia from Thailand in 2006 in a bid to increase the numbers of the [endangered animals](#), despite warnings from environmentalists that [elephants](#) should not be kept in enclosures.

In keeping with its Thai heritage, the zoo has put forward seven possible names to replace the nickname Mr Shuffles, with the final name to be decided by a public vote.

The names are: Pathi Harn (miracle), Tay Wan (boy in heaven), Ming Khwan (good internal strength, good attitude), Nam Chok (brings with him good fortune), Mongkon (auspicious), Boon Thung (merit has led to reaching this life) and Chok Dee (very good luck).

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