

New home for Cambodian killer elephant

December 27 2010



This handout photo taken on December 25 and released by the Wildlife Alliance shows Sambo, a five-tonne bull elephant being hauled onto a truck in a village in Cambodia's southwestern Kampong Speu province. The enraged bull elephant killed its owner and then went on a 10-day rampage in the Cambodian countryside.

An enraged bull elephant that killed its owner and then went on a 10-day rampage in the Cambodian countryside has been taken in by a wildlife rescue centre.

The bull elephant, named Sambo, terrorised villagers in the southwestern province of Kampong Speu and destroyed their crops before he was subdued by wildlife workers on December 15.

The five-tonne animal was confined to a rice field for over a week while a special cage was built to transport him to the Phnom Tamao rescue

centre on the outskirts of the Cambodian capital.

Sambo -- who has displayed violent behaviour in the past and is thought to have killed four people over the years -- arrived at the centre on Saturday evening, a late Christmas present for the animal sanctuary.

"He has been placed in a temporary enclosure for the time being," said communications officer John Maloy from the Wildlife Alliance, adding that Sambo was being kept away from the zoo's five other Asian [elephants](#).

"Sambo is probably too dangerous to mix with them at present," he told AFP.

The Wildlife Alliance believes Sambo is in musth -- a periodic condition in bull elephants that is often accompanied by highly [aggressive behaviour](#).

His handlers hope that eventually Sambo will calm down and find a mate at the rescue centre.

Cambodia is home to about 120 domesticated elephants, according to Jack Highwood who heads the Elephants Livelihood Initiative Environment, a local organisation that assisted in Sambo's transfer.

While there are no official statistics, Highwood estimates that six people have been killed by elephants in Cambodia in the last three years, including Sambo's victims. In all of those cases it was by a male elephant in musth.

The Asian elephant is listed as an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

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