

## South Africa elephant park accused of 'horrific' cruelty

May 20 2014

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This file photo shows elephants in South Africa, pictured on February 9, 2013

A South African animal rights group on Tuesday accused an elephant park of cruelty after "horrific" video footage emerged of abusive training methods used on baby elephants.

"The footage shows elephant calves and juvenile elephants being chained, roped and stretched, shocked with electric cattle prods and hit

with bull hooks," the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) said.

This was done to break the animals' spirit so that they would obey humans, it said in a statement.

"The elephants show signs of crippling injuries with severely swollen legs and feet, debilitating abscesses and wounds," National Council of SPCAs inspector Wendy Willson said.

The video was taken on the premises of Elephants of Eden in the Eastern Cape where they were being trained for elephant-back safaris, she said.

"The calculated and premeditated cruelty of this nature that took place at this facility is a far cry from the loving sanctuary image that Elephants of Eden/Knysna Elephant Park like to portray," Willson said.

The SPCA said it laid cruelty charges with the police against Elephants of Eden, the Knysna Elephant Park, their directors and management.

If the case is brought to court and the directors and managers are convicted, they could face sentences of up to three years in jail on each charge and lose all their elephants, Willson told AFP.

"In simple terms; due to the size, intelligence and nature of elephants, training most often takes place through domination, and the breaking of the elephant's spirit," she said in the statement.

"In order to dominate or force one's will onto an animal such as the elephant, force needs to be applied and thus is a recipe for abuse.

"The captive elephant interaction industry is a form of tourism driven by greed and without any conservation benefit," she said.

A growing number of people in South Africa and around the world had been injured or killed as a result of the rebellion of trained [elephants](#) kept in captivity, the statement said.

"Elephants of Eden and the Knysna Elephant Park are no exceptions - at these facilities two elephant handlers have been killed and others have been seriously injured."

The SPCA was initially denied access to the park for an inspection and had to call for assistance from the police, the SPCA said.

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Citation: South Africa elephant park accused of 'horrific' cruelty (2014, May 20) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-05-south-africa-elephant-accused-horrific.html>

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