

FunFun Facts Friday: Cold Weather and Elephant Choice

Elephants evolved in warm climates, but their responses to cold vary by size, age, and individual physiology. Like all mammals, they rely on thermoregulation to maintain body temperature. In the wild, elephants stay warm by seeking sunlight, using natural shelter, and most importantly, staying active. Constant movement generates internal heat, while warmth absorbed from the sun is stored in their core and released gradually overnight.

In many captive settings, cold weather can mean mandatory indoor confinement. Reduced movement often leads to both mental and physical challenges, including joint stiffness, foot issues, and boredom. That's why access to space, and the power of choice, is essential. True well-being means elephants have room to roam in a suitable climate and the freedom to decide when to move, where to walk, and when to seek shelter.

While elephants can acclimate to cooler temperatures with high-calorie nutrition, comfort is subjective. At **Elephant Refuge North America**, mild winters, free-choice access to a heated barn, and natural shelter such as trees and forest cover allow elephants to regulate their own comfort. By giving elephants the freedom to choose their environment, we empower them to respond to the cold in ways that feel right to them.

Photo: Tarra soaking up the sun on a cool day.

