

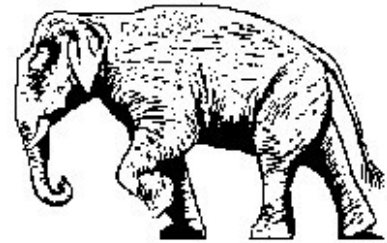
**Dan Koehl** [www.elephant.se](http://www.elephant.se)

**Freelance Elephant Consultant, Trainer, and Stablemaster**

**Contact:** Dan Albert John Koehl, danalbertkoehl@gmail.com

**Location:** Currently in Chiang Mai, Thailand

**Date of Birth:** 28 October 1959, Stockholm, Sweden



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## Professional Summary

Fourth generation within tourism, renowned German-Swedish elephant trainer, zookeeper, and consultant with 48 years of global experience in elephant husbandry, training, and welfare enhancement. Known as "one of Europe's most renowned experts on elephants," with a career spanning zoos, circuses, and sanctuaries across Europe, Africa, and Asia. Author of the Elephant Encyclopedia and developer of a hybrid training system integrating traditional Asian methods with Western positive reinforcement techniques. Committed to modernizing elephant management to international standards, including Elephant Standards and Asian Captive Elephant Standards (ACES), while improving animal welfare and public perception.

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## Professional Experience

### Freelance Elephant Consultant & Trainer

#### *Self-Employed*

*1977 – Present (48 years as of March 25, 2025)*

- Managed and trained 96 elephants across 8 countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia, including zoos and circuses (e.g., Zoos in Borås, Bussolengo, Dresden, Karlsruhe, Kolmården, Linz, Munich, Prague, Stockholm, Turku, and Vienna, Circus Krone, Cirkus Scott), and camps in Africa and Asia (e.g., Elephant Experience, Sondelani Lodge, Zimbabwe, and Airavata Elephant Foundation, Kulen Elephant Forest, Cambodia).
- Developed a hybrid training system combining Asian traditions with Western positive reinforcement, achieving improved elephant welfare, obedience, and keeper-elephant relationships in Cambodia and beyond.
- Prepared facilities for Elephant Standards accreditation, including documentation and welfare upgrades, with an estimated 3-month timeline per project.
- Implemented transparent, visitor-friendly training sessions to enhance public trust, using 700-1000 kg/month of oral rewards (e.g., bananas) for groups of 10-15 elephants.
- Served as "Royal Head Groom" at Kolmården Wildlife Park (2008), managing, and artificial insemination training, of elephants "Boa" and "Saonoi," donated by King Rama IX Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand to King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden.
- Teacher in Zookeeping, *Enskede Gårds Gymnasium, Stockholm, Sweden*

## Elephant Trainer & Consultant

*Airavata Elephant Foundation, Banlung, Cambodia*

2019 – now

- Care, management, and training of elephants and mahouts, introducing modern husbandry practices, care and training of first captive born elephant in 30 years.

## Consultant & Trainer (Selected Engagements)

- *Tiergarten Schönbrunn, Vienna, Austria (1998)*: Assisted Director Dr. Helmut Pechlaner in retraining elephants and staff, establishing new team amid a critical campaign.
- *Dresden Zoo, Germany (1999)*: Supported Director Dr. Herbert Lücker with elephant training and staff coaching under animal rights scrutiny.
- *Elephant Experience, Sondelani Game Lodge and Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe (2000-2006)*: Tamed and trained 10 wild caught elephants for safari riding.
- *Kulen Elephant Forest, Siem Reap, Cambodia (2019-2024)*: Elephant trainer & Welfare Director, overseeing care, management, and training of elephants and mahouts, focusing on welfare and modern husbandry practices, work for the ACES certification, being partnership key person for students from The School for Field Studies international academic study abroad program of Asian elephant ecology, conservation and welfare.

## Head Elephant Keeper & Stablemaster

*Various Locations (1970s – 2000s)*

- Held roles at Skansen (Stockholm), Vienna Zoo, Kolmarden Wildlife Park (Kolmården), Circus Krone (Germany), and more, managing elephant care and staff training.

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## Education

- **Zookeeping Studies**  
*Zoo Biology, Taxonomy, Enskede Gårds Gymnasium, Stockholm, Sweden*
- **Higher Education**  
*Stockholm University, Sweden*
- **Acting Training**  
*Calle Flygare Teaterskola, Stockholm, Sweden*
- **Licence for chemical Immobilization**  
*Dr. Bengt Röken, Kolmarden Wildlife Park, Sweden*
- **Practical Apprenticeships**
  - Elephant keeper at Circus Scott (Stockholm) under Banda Vidane.
  - Mahout training in Sri Lanka and India.
  - Traditional German elephant management at Hanover Zoo and Tierpark Hagenbeck under Karl Kock.

## Skills

- Elephant Husbandry, Training, and Medical Treatment Preparation
  - Welfare Enhancement & Accreditation (Elephant Standards, ACES)
  - Cross-Cultural Management (Europe, Africa, Asia)
  - Positive Reinforcement & Classical Dominance Techniques
  - Staff Coaching & Team Building
  - Web Development, PHP programming, MySQL database (e.g., Elephant Encyclopedia)
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## Achievements

- Founded the *Elephant Encyclopedia* (1995), one of the world's first online encyclopedias.
  - Developed an evaluation system meeting Elephant Standards (ACES) criteria.
  - Trained large groups of elephants (10+ animals) single-handedly using reward-based methods in Western zoos and circuses.
  - Co-authored *Elephant Management Safety Guidelines* (2002) for EEP/EEKMA.
  - Advisor to Asian Captive Elephant Standards (ACES) since 2023, part of a GIZ and PATA program, and to Erawan Elephant Alliance, Chiang Mai, Thailand
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## Certifications & Affiliations

- **Professional Memberships:**
    - Elephant Managers Association (1990s – Present).
    - Deputy Executive Secretary, European Elephant Keepers and Managers Association (EEKMA) (1998–2008).
    - Board of Directors, Elefanten-Schutz Europa.
    - Chairperson, Defend the Elephants (Sweden)
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## Additional Information

- **Languages:** implied proficiency in Swedish, English, and German
  - **Relatives:** Albert Köhl, cofounder Strand Hotel, Stockholm (grandfather), Birger Nordholm, founding director of the Swedish National Tourist Office in USA (grandfather), John Nordlander, Flagship Commander at Swedish America Line (granduncle), Edouard Dieffenbach (nephew) founder of The Free French Camel Corps in Africa.
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## References

Available upon request from facilities such as Airavata Elephant Foundation, Kulen Elephant Forest, Wildlife Alliance, The School for Field Studies, and Wildlife Alliance (Cambodia).