

STATEMENT ON ELEPHANT ENDOTHELIOVIC HERPESVIRUS (EEHV) DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT FOR ELEPHANT CALF

(February 3, 2010 - Vienna, VA) - *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*[®] today announced that its one year-old male elephant calf Barack has tested positive and is being treated for the elephant endotheliotropic herpesvirus (EEHV). On Thursday, January 21st, although Barack wasn't sick, the elephant husbandry and veterinary staff closely observed what could be considered early symptoms of EEHV while the *Ringling Bros.*[®] Blue Unit was in still in Florida. Therefore, it was determined by elephant husbandry staff and veterinarians that Barack and his mother, Bonnie return to the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*[®], located in Florida, where they continued to manage Barack's ongoing treatment. At this time, *Ringling Bros.* veterinarians are cautiously optimistic that his treatment has been successful.

Barack's tests were confirmed by the National Elephant Herpesvirus Laboratory at the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoological Park in Washington, DC. Historically the EEHV infects only elephants and usually has a fatal outcome within a week of the onset of symptoms, which include head and neck swelling, tongue cyanosis and lethargy. Elephants with EEHV symptoms are immediately started on famciclovir (an anti-herpes drug also used in humans) to increase their chance of survival. *Ringling Bros.* has been a funding contributor to the National Zoo's EEHV lab, in addition to providing veterinary consulting resources to other facilities with elephants that have treated the EEHV.

Since the identification of EEHV, it has been determined that the virus has caused the death of almost one-quarter of the calves born into human care in North America and Europe, and recently investigators have reported multiple domestic and wild elephant deaths in Asia attributable to the virus. EEHV is a serious health threat to the Asian elephant and in North America only nine known elephants have survived the disease, two of which (including Barack) are currently residing at the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*. With 53 elephants, *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey* has the largest herd of Asian elephants in the Western Hemisphere and the most successful breeding program in North America with 22 elephant births since the early 1990's.

Barack's veterinary team is lead by Dennis Schmitt, D.V.M., Ph.D. *Ringling Bros.* Chair of Veterinary Services and Director of Research. Dr. Schmitt supervises the veterinary services for the three traveling *Ringling Bros.* circus units and oversees research at the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*. Considered the leading North American expert in elephant reproductive physiology and veterinary management, Dr. Schmitt is also the leading veterinary reproductive specialist in domestic and exotic animals and professor of animal sciences at Missouri State University. Known for his pioneering research efforts in EEHV, Dr. Schmitt was the first veterinarian to administer the successful treatment for the virus in an elephant following EEHV's description in the late 1980's.