How intelligent are elephants?

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Elephant cognition

is animal cognition as present in elephants. Most contemporary ethologists view the elephant as one of the world's most intelligent animals. Elephants manifest a wide variety of behaviors, including those associated with grief, learning, mimicry, playing, altruism, tool use, compassion, cooperation, self-awareness, memory, and communication.[1][2][3] They can also exhibit negative qualities such as revenge towards those perceived to have harmed them or their families. "Duncan McNair, a lawyer and founder of conservation charity Save The Asian Elephants, told *Newsweek* that ... although gentle creatures, elephants can be 'dangerous and deadly'."[4]

Evidence suggests elephants may understand pointing, the ability to nonverbally communicate an object by extending their multi-purpose trunks.[5]

An elephant brain weighs around 5 kg (11 lb), which is about four times the size of a human brain and the heaviest of any terrestrial animal. It has about 257 billion neurons, which is about three times the number of neurons as a human brain. However, the cerebral cortex, which is the major center of cognition, has only about one-third of the number of neurons as a human's cerebral cortex.[6] While elephant brains look similar to those of humans and other mammals and has the same functional areas, there are certain unique structural differences.[7]

The intelligence of elephants is described as on par with cetaceans[8][9][10][11] and various primates.[9][12][13] Due to its higher cognitive intelligence and presence of family ties, researchers and wildlife experts argue that it is morally wrong for humans to kill them.[14] Aristotle described the elephant as "the animal that surpasses all others in wit and mind."[15]