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# Alaska Zoo to Build Elephant Treadmill for 4,100-Kilo Maggie

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It's not just the circus where elephants are in the spotlight these days. America's zoos are paying extra-close attention to these gigantic mammals as well.

Highly social elephants need a lot of room, for obvious reasons. And the recent death of Peaches, a 55-year-old elephant at Chicago's Lincoln Park Zoo -- just three months after another pachyderm died there -- has revived the debate about whether elephants can tolerate cold climates.

Just last May, the zoo in chilly Detroit, Michigan, closed its elephant exhibit and sent its two specimens -- Winky and Wanda -- to a sanctuary in toastier Tennessee.

During the rare times that elephants face freezing temperatures in the wild, they huddle for warmth. But there aren't enough elephants in most northern U.S. zoos to do any huddling.

Which brings us to Maggie, the only elephant in the [Alaska Zoo](#) in Anchorage, one of America's coldest places. The zoo's directors talked about selling Maggie to a warmer zoo but decided it would be riskier to move her than to keep her in frigid Alaska.

That's because, at 4,100 kilos, Maggie is twice the recommended weight for an elephant cow. Yes, she's fat -- even by elephant standards. So the zoo has decided to provide her with the world's first elephant treadmill -- a really big

aerobics machine on which Maggie will have to walk . . . and walk . . . and walk every day to earn her meals.

No one makes elephant treadmills. So the zoo is turning to mining companies for help. They know all about heavy conveyor belts.

We can see it now: Maggie in shorts and a halter top, fitness tape pounding in her headsets, television tuned to a nature channel, her four extra-extra-extra-large athletic shoes clomping away. If Maggie is ever to lose enough kilos to pack her trunk for Florida, she'll have to keep pace!