



SHIVERS!
WHAT JUMBO
JUMPERS

Never thought of elephants feeling chilled! But during a particularly severe Indian winter, some of these gentle giants were suffering from the cold. So locals started stitching jumpers and jackets – big, big, big woolly jumpers made from giant crocheted Granny Squares and XXXXXXL fleecy lined jackets.

As the cold wave hit the northern parts of the country, local stitches rallied to help protect the frail rescued animals at the Elephant Conservation and Care Center (part of Wildlife SOS, an organisation run in collaboration with the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department, which rehabilitates abused

captive elephants). CEO and co-founder of Wildlife SOS, Kartick Satyanarayan, said that a number of elephants they rescue have spent the majority of their lives doing hard work in harsh and cruel conditions. At the centres (in Mathura and Haryana, India) they are given frequent baths, a nutritious diet and good veterinary care. But their past still impacts their psychological and physical health. “They are weak and vulnerable, having suffered so much abuse, making them susceptible to ailments, such as pneumonia. The cold also aggravates their arthritis, which is a common issue that our rescued elephants have to deal with,” he says.

Hence their new threads. Each sweater took 20-25 days to make and features colourful yarns and long leg coverings. The jumbo jackets aren’t as pretty, but were designed with practicality in mind. Along with the fleece lining, they’re made with

tarpaulin material for wind and water protection. “The entire garb is strapped on to hold it comfortably in place and to prevent the more playful and younger elephants from tearing them off and throwing them about while playing in their enclosures,” says Kartick.

But these jumpers and jackets do much more than keep the elephants all comfy and cosy. They’re part of a program to provide women in impoverished communities with an alternative livelihood. This program includes initiatives for women to take up income-generating ‘soft’ skills, including stitching.

So that leaves only one question: How the devil do you dress an elephant?

For more information, visit wildlifesos.org/elephant-conservation-and-care-center.

- Janai Velez

