



Zinc protection for a giant back scratcher

Taronga Zoo has a special claim to world fame. It boasts what surely must be the world's largest back scratcher. A galvanized structure, 9 ft. high, it carries a coated abrasive of the kind normally used for heavy-duty grinding of metal. The abrasive provides a solution to the scratching problems of Chori, the female African elephant who lives in this enclosure.

The structure, which weighs about a quarter of a ton, was donated to the Zoo by Norton Australia Pty. Ltd., manufacturer of Bear coated abrasives.

The scratcher is a steel H-section with a concrete footing. It was hot dipped in zinc for long-lasting corrosion prevention by Galvanising Services Pty. Ltd., Bankstown.

The abrasive — 16-grit Resinall Metalite — is mounted to a detachable 3/8" plate.

Explaining the purpose of the scratcher, Mr. Dave Cody, Taronga Zoo's Head Keeper of mammals, said elephants had trouble removing dead skin which they renewed constantly in the same manner as humans.

"They rub themselves against trees or the corners of buildings to try to get rid of the dead skin," Mr. Cody said.

"The African elephant (being less tractable) is much more difficult to rub down by hand than the Indian and we were greatly interested when Norton suggested that an elephant scratcher incorporating abrasive could be designed.

"We fitted a trial plate of sandpaper to the wall of the African elephant's pen and this performed successfully, standing up to the weather and the elephant.

"The structure now installed is curved at the top to fit over the elephant's back where the dead skin more readily accumulates," Mr. Cody added.

Mr. Warren Peel, Norton's Advertising and Sales Promotion Manager, says that the Zoo application was an appropriate demonstration of his company's slogan: "A little Bear will fix it."

We might add: "And a little Zinc helps."