

Unexplained elephant deaths in Botswana

Hundreds of elephants have reportedly died mysteriously since May in Botswana's Okavango Delta. The country has the world's largest elephant population, estimated at 130,000

African elephant



Okavango Delta: At least 275 elephant deaths confirmed since early May. Delta is home to estimated 15,000 elephants



■ **Poaching:** Ruled out as possible cause as carcasses have been found with their tusks on

■ **Anthrax:** Infectious disease caused by spore-forming bacteria – which sometimes affects wildlife in Botswana – not found in samples taken from dead animals

■ **Algal blooms:** Can make water toxic to large animals. Up to 70% of dead elephants have been found near watering holes, but other animals do not seem to be dying in large numbers

■ Drought

Common cause of death in arid parts of southern Africa, but researchers say there is ample water in Okavango region following recent rain

■ Potential other disease

Live elephants seen in physically weakened state or walking in circles, indicating possible neurological impairment. Some carcasses found face down, suggesting sudden collapse and death

