



ENDCAP

www.endcaptivity.org

WILD ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES FACT SHEET

Introduction

The total number of travelling circuses in Europe is unknown, but estimates put the number at more than 1,000 within the EU. A large number of these circuses use wild animals.

There are believed to be more than 50 species of wild animal currently in use in circuses in Europe, including:

Chimpanzee	Baboon	Macaque
Black bear	Brown bear	Fox
Wolf	Hyaena	Jaguar
Leopard	Lion	Snow leopard
Tiger	Puma	Sea lion
Antelope	Bison	Bactrian camel
Eland	Giraffe	Guanaco
Hippopotamus	Kangaroo	Pygmy hippopotamus
Reindeer	Rhinoceros	Water buffalo
Zebra	Penguin	Emu
Ostrich	Parrot	Vulture
Alligator	Elephant (African and Asian)	

Legislation

- Almost all Member States have animal welfare legislation, which generally can apply to wild animals in circuses.
- Austria was the first EU member state to ban the use of wild animals in circuses.
- Hungary and Croatia have since banned wild animals in circuses.
- Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, and Sweden have a list of wild animals that cannot be kept in circuses.
- Belgium, Estonia and Poland prohibit the use of wild-caught animals.
- England, Scotland, Wales, Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia, are currently considering restrictions on the use of wild animals in circuses.

Nonetheless, there appears to be insufficient protection of wild animals in circuses, and additionally the mobile nature of circuses makes it even more difficult to ensure compliance. Voluntary circus industry guidelines have been in existence for many years, yet evidence suggests that these have done little or nothing to ensure the welfare of wild animals in circuses.

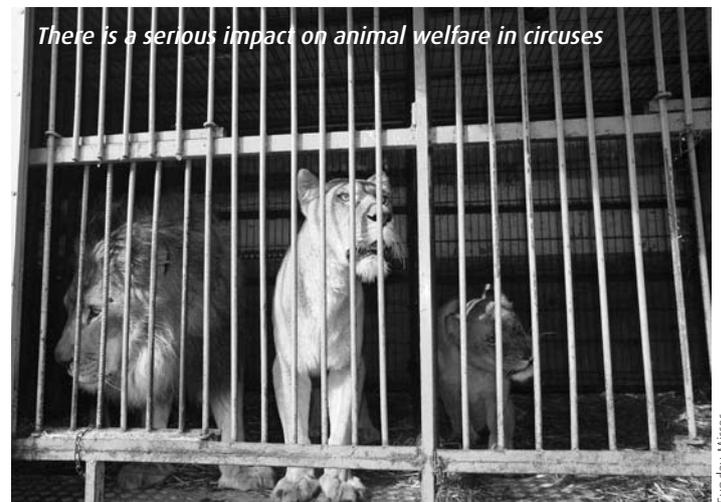
Animal Welfare in Circuses

By their very nature, travelling circuses operate in such a way as to facilitate ease of frequent transportation and daily animal control. Wild animals in circuses are subjected to a number of factors that similar animals in zoos, for example, are not. Circuses simply cannot provide the sizable and complex living conditions to guarantee animals' wellbeing. Instead animals in travelling circuses are subjected to:

- Cramped conditions in trailers
- Restricted movement (chaining and tethering)
- Repeated and extended transportation
- Repeated loading and unloading
- Inadequate and unnatural social environments
- A lack of privacy
- High noise levels

Even when born in captivity, wild animals have inherent behavioural and environmental needs that simply cannot be met in a circus environment. Despite difficulty in assessing living conditions, animal management practices and animal behaviour in circuses, it is evident the impact of circuses on animal welfare is serious and potentially debilitating. Problems observed in circus animals include:

- Physiological stress responses
- Mental and physical suffering
- Bouts of abnormal behaviour
- Health risks from inadequate hygiene
- Dietary deficiencies



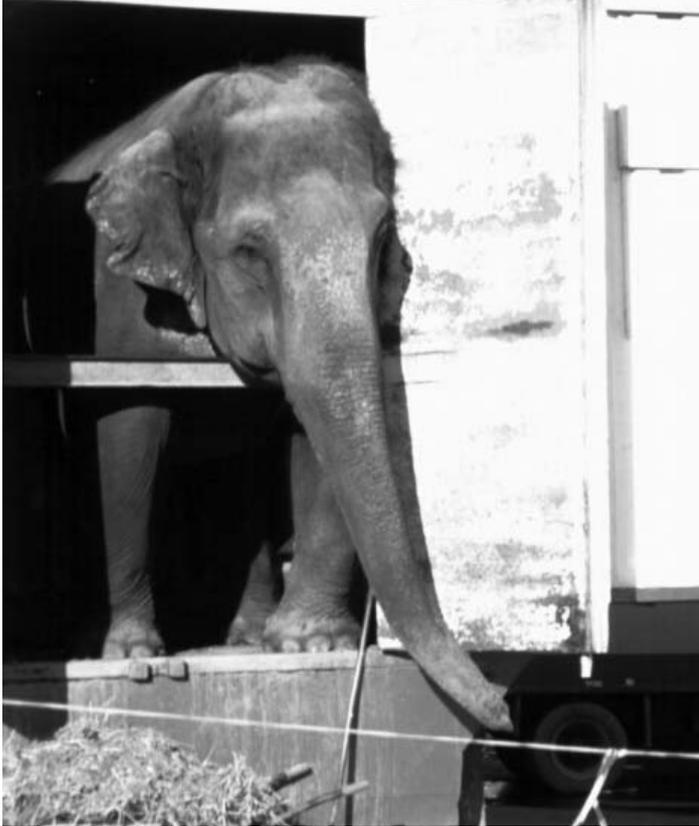
There is a serious impact on animal welfare in circuses

Sunday Mirror

Continued overleaf

EUROPE'S FORGOTTEN ANIMALS

Circus animals are subject to cramped conditions in trailers



BFF

Training and performance of wild animals in circuses

The way circus animals are trained cannot be easily observed. However, numerous undercover investigations and reports from ex-trainers have revealed evidence of mistreatment or abuse of animals.

Performance may be one of the most stressful aspects of a circus animal's life. Many acts wild animals are made to perform have nothing to do with their natural behaviour, and may even lead to serious health problems – for example, circus tricks have been implicated in causing joint problems in elephants.

Confiscation of circus animals

Even in the worst cases, inadequate legislation and the lack of space to rehome animals in sanctuaries means authorities are often not able to confiscate circus animals. Furthermore, confiscation is very expensive, rising to hundreds of thousands of euros. In addition, the itinerant and changeable nature of circuses make it difficult to enforce any formal complaints.

Conservation of wild animals in circuses?

Some claims have been made recently that circuses can play a role in conservation. To date, the evidence for

this is unsubstantiated, and it seems a spurious and unlikely activity for circuses.

Public safety and wild animals in circuses

Wild animals in circuses also present a potential disease or injury risk to humans. Travelling circuses cannot guarantee the security and separation from the public such as found in most zoos, for example. Many of these animals are potentially extremely dangerous to humans, yet close proximity or even contact between public and animals may occur in circuses. There also remains the threat of zoonotic or animal disease transmission, and there have been numerous incidences of animal escapes.



The use of wild animals in circuses is contrary to the basic principles of welfare

Circuses have a cultural role in Europe, but the use of wild animals in circuses is contrary to the basic principles of animal welfare. ENDCAP seeks to help achieve national bans in the use of all wild animals in circuses as a priority, while acknowledging the cultural significance of circuses without animals.

Objections were made to the Austrian decision to ban wild animals in circuses on the basis that it restricted the freedom to provide services. However, Austria successfully defended the ban on the basis that:

- it pursues an objective in accordance with the Treaty, namely animal protection, which has had considerable emphasis placed on it in Community law as well since 1999;
- it follows case law from the Court of Justice whereby national measures may restrict the freedom to provide services;
- the adverse effects on wild animals of keeping them in circuses and through training and frequent changes of location are far higher than those which result from keeping them in accordance with minimum standards, thus more restrictive measures are required;
- the absolute ban on keeping or using them in circuses – in particular on the grounds that it is technically impossible to keep them in circuses under conditions appropriate for the species – is the only way effectively to attain the objective of

EUROPE'S FORGOTTEN ANIMALS

animal protection which is legitimate under Community law.