

ANIMAL DEFENDERS
INTERNATIONAL
PARLIAMENTARY BRIEFING



In recent years an enormous body of evidence has been produced revealing the extent of circus animal suffering.

The number of circuses touring the UK with animals has halved to just eleven.

The number of animal-free circuses touring has doubled.

There is a compelling case to ban travelling circuses with animals.

Yet, in an extraordinary move, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs) is considering a 'Code of Practice' prepared on behalf of the Association of Circus Proprietors of Great Britain.





- Animal circuses are opposed by all of the animal welfare groups with an interest in the field, including: Animal Defenders; Captive Animals' Protection Society; Royal Society for the Protection of Animals; World Society for the Protection of Animals; Animal Aid; and Born Free Foundation.

- The 'Standards for the care and welfare of circus animals on tour' have been prepared on behalf of the Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP) by David Hibling of Zippos Circus. Hibling appeared as a defence witness for the notorious Mary Cawley (nee Chipperfield). The country was appalled by the scenes of

Mary Cawley thrashing and kicking a baby chimpanzee. Hibling was shown three videos of assaults on the chimp Trudy and asked, "See anything which would constitute cruelty?" Hibling replied unequivocally "No". Asked "Would you do what Mary Cawley did?" Hibling replied "Yes". Mary Cawley was convicted of twelve counts of cruelty concerning the events shown on video. Hibling was also shown video of Roger Cawley whipping a sick elephant, Flora, making her go faster and faster, Hibling again saw nothing cruel. Cawley was convicted of cruelty to Flora.

- The ACP worked on this Code of Practice with Home Office officials prior to the 2001 election. The Animal Defenders met with the Home Office Minister expressing concern about the code and that this might be circulated to local authorities without any balanced argument. Subsequently, responsibility for the issue has passed to DEFRA.

- Providing circuses with their own lower standards will only serve to hold back animal welfare progress in other fields, particularly in zoos.

- The public were surprised that the Cawleys were not charged with more offences. In Animal Defenders' videos they were seen thrashing camels, and even beating them about the faces. Cawley had even beaten Flora the elephant with an iron bar. These were not deemed offences because it is legal to use 'necessary force' on animals. The Magistrate at the Cawley trial noted, "The camels were being trained in the ring. It's not for us to judge if that's right – it is legal." A chilling reminder of the pitiful protection for circus animal so long as they remain legal.

- The RSPCA has said of the proposed Code of Practice: *"...the RSPCA has a long standing and well-publicised policy of opposition to the use of any animals in circuses. This is due to their transient nature and the commercial environment in which they operate, to guarantee an on-going high standard of care and welfare. This is particularly so in the case of wild animals. It is therefore extremely disappointing that the Home Office has decided to work with circus proprietors in this way. The production of these guidelines would appear to be giving the Government's approval to the continued use of circus animals. Such action also seems to be at odds with the growing public acceptance that the use of animals in circuses is inappropriate."*



● In a survey of 318 local authorities, of those that had considered the issue of animals in circuses on their land, the number with a ban (or partial ban) outnumbered those that allowed animal circuses by more than 2 to 1. 39% had banned all animal acts; 17% ban just wild animal acts; 21.5% said that they never received requests from circuses with animals; just 22.5% continue to allow all animal circuses. Those local authorities that have banned animal acts have already rejected a code of practice from the Circus Proprietors. A government-endorsed code of practice will seriously undermine those authorities that have taken a stand. And it should be noted that they were encouraged to do so by the Labour Government in the light of the Animal Defenders Ugliest Show on Earth exposé.



● It is claimed that the circus is traditional. This is debatable, but animal suffering cannot be permitted because it has gone on for a long time, otherwise we would still have cockfighting and bearbaiting. Besides, animals are just one component of the circus, there are other willing performers. The number of non-animal circuses now outnumber the animal circuses two to one. Circus will survive without animals, just as funfairs have continued without freakshows.

● At present animal circuses tarnish the image of circuses which have gone animal-free because they can be perceived as being one and the same. This misunderstanding has been exacerbated by animal circuses, which discard their animals for a season, and then come back with them the next. The industry can be healthier without animals.

● The way circuses keep animals, the way the animals are trained, and the demeaning tricks they perform are outside what the vast majority of people in the UK consider to be acceptable. This is compounded by the fact that this is purely for entertainment. With fur farming, which the Government has banned, it was felt that this was now considered morally outside other areas of farming. The same is true of animal circuses.

● India and Singapore have banned all wild animal acts. This was particularly courageous for India, where there are now several hundred animals to rehome and just 4 rescue centres, with 2 more under construction. With animal circuses at an all time low level in the UK there would not be this scale of problem. One of the key elements in securing the Singapore ban was the evidence of circus animal abuse collected by the Animal Defenders in the UK.

● There are also considerable public safety concerns. During our 18 month undercover investigation of UK animal circuses, the Animal Defenders witnessed numerous animals escaping from enclosures or pens at permanent quarters including sea lions, goats, a chimpanzee, and elephant, llama, a pig, camels, wallabies. Four lions escaped at once from Chipperfield Enterprises in 1993. In 1997 a male lion climbing through a hole in a ring cage at the site was only driven back in by Animal Defenders Field Officers. An employee who had been at the site a very short time had an arm bitten off by a tiger in 1998. Last year a vet was shot and killed in Warsaw during attempts to recapture three tigers that had escaped from a circus.



A lion almost escapes from a circus practice ring.

Circus holding is universally restrictive. At best animals might get small 'exercise' pens for limited periods.

Circus animals spend almost their entire lives on the road, travelling from one makeshift encampment to another. With the best will in the world circuses cannot provide adequate conditions for the animals in their care.

For a detailed, candid assessment of the treatment of circus animals see the Animal Defenders' report *The Ugliest Show on Earth*.

The Decline of UK Animal Circuses

An AD survey of UK animal circuses indicates a sharp decline in animal circuses (from 22 to 11) since the launch of our *'Ugliest Show on Earth'* report in January 1998. This has been matched by a steady rise in animal-free circuses (from 9 to 23). Data has been taken from observations, and circus industry publications.

It should be noted that the graph below only features touring circuses and so doesn't include the closure of the UK's largest supplier of animal acts – Mary Chipperfield Promotions.

Whilst government may be slow to act in the face of overwhelming evidence, the public are voting with their feet.

It should also be noted that this graph does not reflect the growth of animal-free circus outside this traditional arena, such as Cirque du Soleil at the Albert Hall, performance at the Dome, and events like the Edinburgh Fringe.

