

# STOP CIRCUS SUFFERING

Animal Circuses in Ireland



Camel struck in the face.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Elephant chained alone.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

## Introduction

In the last 100 years human understanding of the planet we live on and the animals with whom we share our world has grown enormously. We have made great strides in technology, medicine and learning. Yet how can we consider ourselves civilised, whilst we continue to allow the suffering and abuse of animals, simply for entertainment?

## Background

Animal Defenders International (ADI) and Animal Rights Action Network (ARAN) have launched "Stop Circus Suffering", a campaign to end the use of animals in circuses in Ireland.

This report is based on observations by ADI Field Officers of circuses touring Ireland in 2000 and 2003. A total of seven animal circuses were observed during this study. ADI undercover Field Officers secured employment in two circuses, Mexican Circus and Daredevil Circus, and gathered video and photographs.

Between 2000 and 2003, at least 147 animals were touring Ireland with travelling circuses. Our observations reveal that animals endured severe confinement in deprived and unnatural environments, a lack of enrichment, inadequate diets, and physical abuse. We also noted animals displaying disturbed behaviour - such as pointless repetitive movements - which indicate severe stress. These are animals being driven out of their minds.

## Summary of findings

### ● **Animals living in inadequate, deprived and unnatural conditions.**

Severe confinement is a consistent finding in travelling animal circuses all over the world. In Ireland, we found that this was compounded by inappropriate husbandry for the species including lack of space to exercise properly or perform natural behaviours and for many, a lack of social interaction with their own species.

### ● **Violence used to control animals**, examples (caught on video) included:

A hippo whipped to hurry it along when it was already walking in the desired direction;

A camel was first slapped in the face (by hand), then hit in the face with a broom and finally jabbed with the broom handle;

A keeper whipping an elephant in order to get her to move;

A baby camel being roughly handled to force him to move;

A presenter punching, then kicking an elephant.

It should also be noted that within months of being convicted of cruelty in the UK, Mary Chipperfield was supplying animals to Courtney's Mexican Circus. The court case (based on ADI evidence) had shown that Chipperfield believed violence to train animals was acceptable.

● **A range of animals displaying disturbed, repetitive behaviour.** This included swaying, pacing, weaving and head bobbing, and was observed in elephants, horses and camels. Horses also became agitated when confined and tried to bite each other.

● **Circus workers failing to provide veterinary attention to injured animals.**

● **When circuses moved town, animals were kept in their trailers for unnecessarily long periods** – up to almost 10 times longer than a journey had actually taken. Elephants were kept in their transporter on one journey for 59 hours.

● **Poor standards of public safety** (and indeed animal safety). This included a hippo wandering towards a main road because an electric fence had not been erected – an ADI Field Officer alerted staff before the animal reached the road.

● **Pregnant animals being transported and continuing to perform whilst pregnant.**

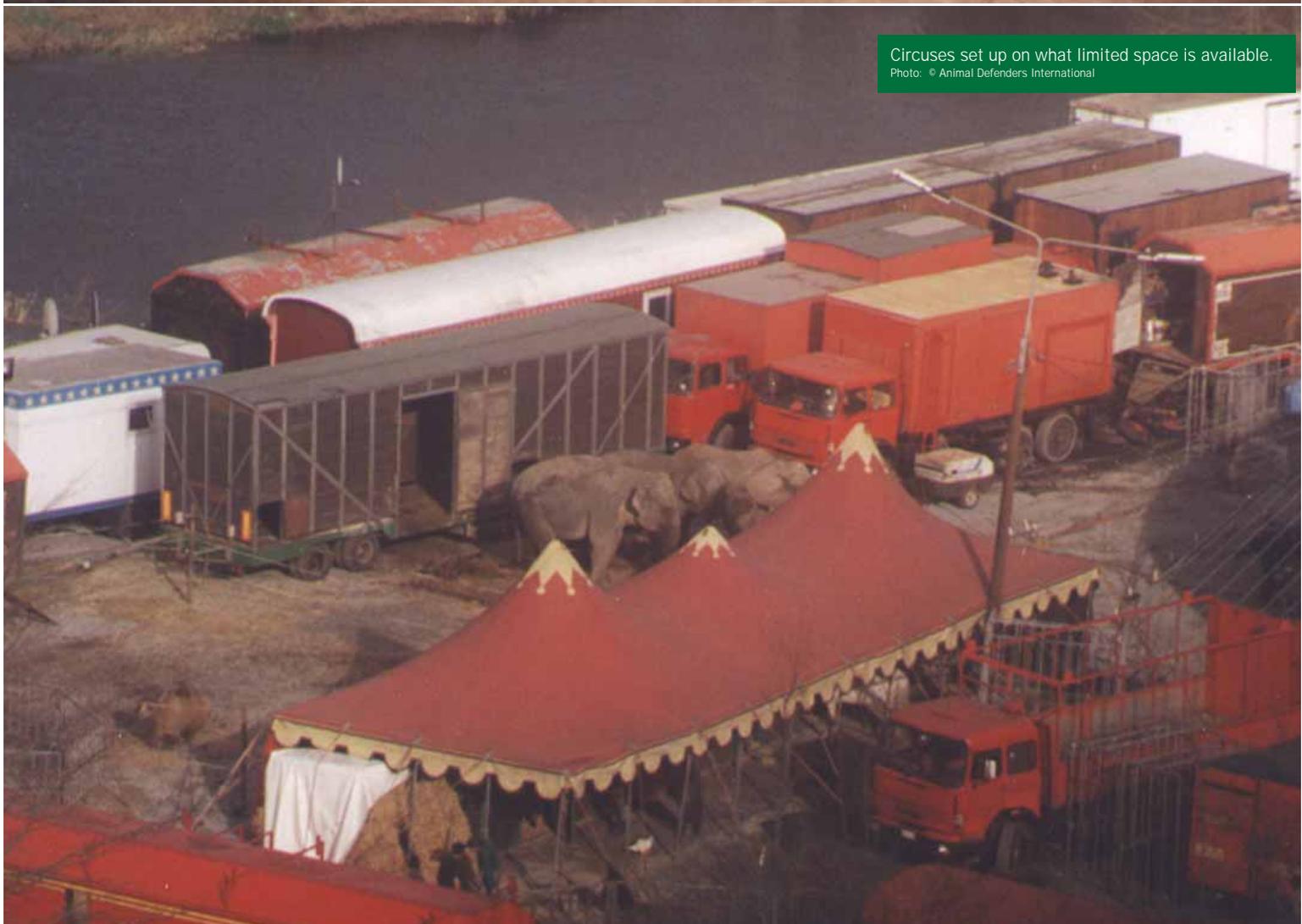
## Circuses visited

2000: Daredevil Circus, Fossetts Circus, Tom Duffy's Circus, Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni Circus), Mexican Circus and The American 3-Ring Circus

2003: Daredevil Circus, Fossetts Circus, Tom Duffy's Circus and Circus Vegas



Animals are kept in transporters for very long periods when the circus moves town.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circuses set up on what limited space is available.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

# Animal circuses in Ireland

## Animals with circuses in Ireland

These tables represent animals observed by ADI with Irish Circuses between 2000 and 2003. It should be noted that some animals currently touring are not included, for example, a monkey with Circus New York attacked a child in Tralee, County Kerry in July 2005. These tables do however, highlight the range of different species able to tour Ireland with circuses.

### Exotic / Wild Animals = 69

Pachyderms		Cats		Ungulates		Reptiles	
Elephants (African)	6	Tigers	6	Bison	2	Snakes	22
Elephants (Asian)	4			Llamas	7	Crocodiles	4
Rhinoceros	1			Camels	12		
Hippopotamus	1			Zebroid	1	<b>Other</b>	
				Guanaco	1	Seals	2



### Domestic Animals

### Total = 78

Dogs	9	Goats	2	Donkeys	1	Horses	34
Geese	19	Ponies	13				

(Our definition of "Domestic" is that of animals commonly domesticated in Ireland, and reared over many years for specific traits.)



## Confinement and deprivation

Travelling from place to place, week after week, even with the best of intentions, circuses cannot provide animals with the facilities they need to remain healthy, with both their physical and psychological needs met. Circuses set up on whatever land is available in a town, or where they might attract the most visitors. No consideration is given to the needs of the animals. This was particularly highlighted during observations of the Mexican Circus in January 2000, where animals were left incarcerated in their transporters for up to 43 hours without free access to water, and with no opportunity whatsoever to exercise.

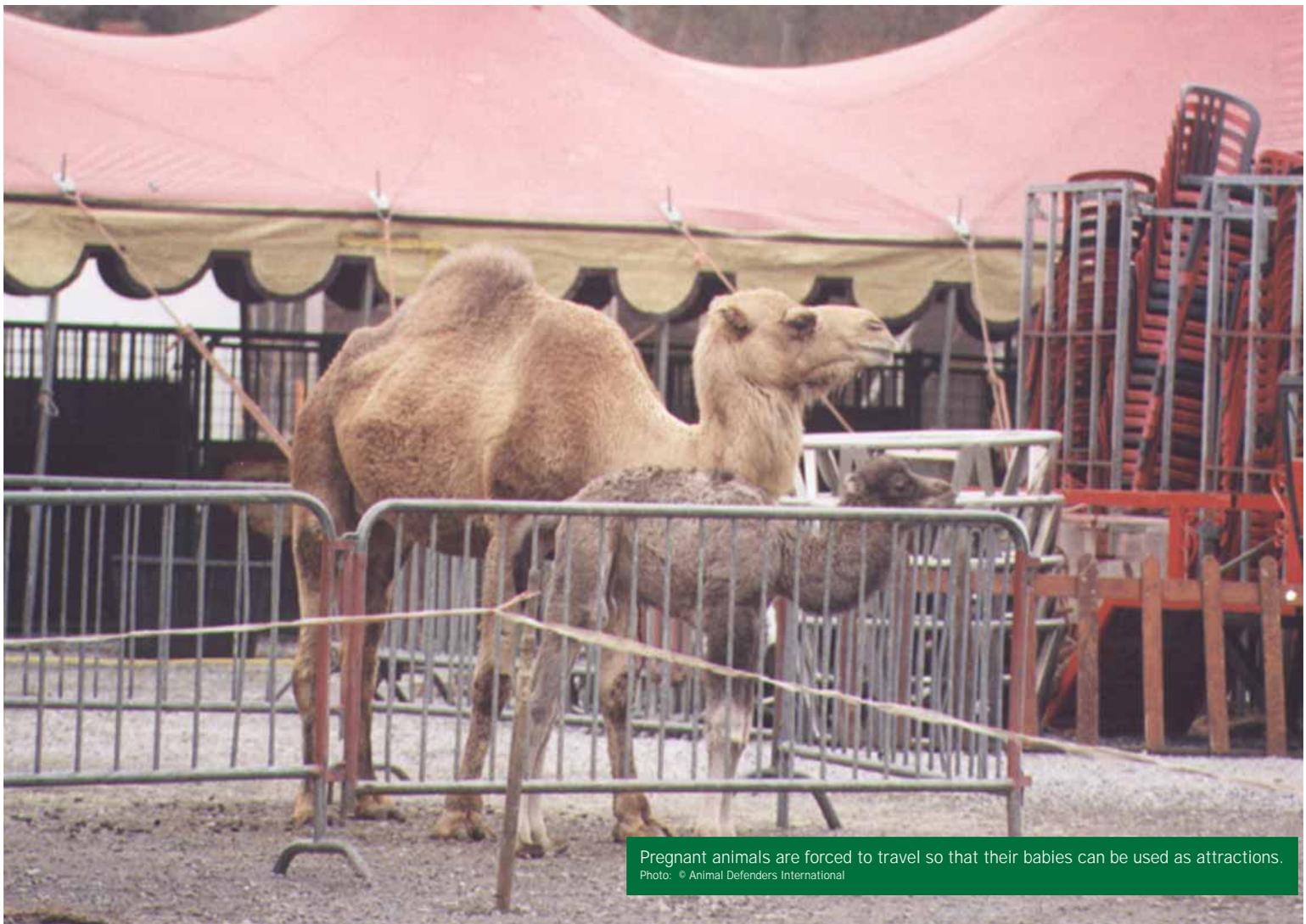
The temporary nature of travelling circuses means that throughout the long touring season animals are severely confined, and this causes suffering. Animals are caged on the backs of lorries, they are tied in stalls, and they are chained.

For lions, tigers and bears with circuses, permanent accommodation is usually a cage on the back of a truck. The average space for each animal is about two metres by two and a half metres, barely larger than the animal itself, and that includes the space where they have to urinate and defecate. Sometimes they are provided with an additional "exercise enclosure", but this is generally much smaller than the name suggests. The six tigers with Tom Duffy's Circus had an enclosure of just 3.7 metres by 7.3 metres.

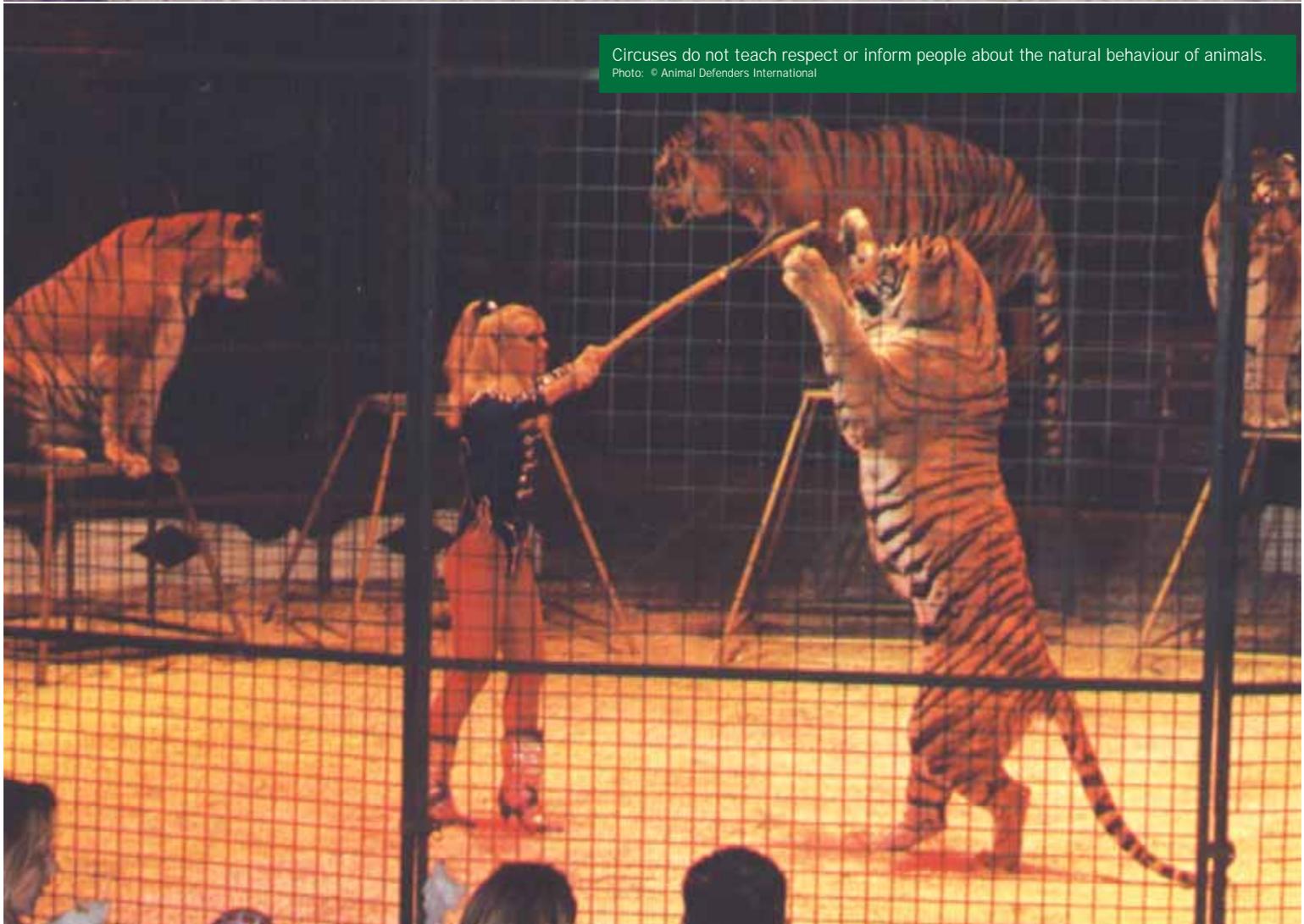
The elephant is the largest animal that walks the earth, and in the wild elephants travel for up to 20 kilometres a day, eating, bathing, enjoying complex social interactions with their own kind, even mourning their dead. As these herds move, they transform the very landscape they live in. In the circus they spend most of their day chained by the legs, barely able to shuffle a pace or two forwards or backwards. If lucky they get a small enclosure.

Micki, the elephant with Fossetts Circus (who the circus boasts is the largest African elephant in Europe), was filmed and photographed in a tent chained by a front and a hind leg barely able to move. The animal is also socially isolated from its own species.

Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) came to Ireland from France, so the animals had a long and arduous journey just to get there. The Italian circus brought with it three elephants, seven horses, sixteen geese, two pythons, four camels, two goats, a hippopotamus, a rhinoceros and a bison. The circus, like others, then set up on town centre sites, where space would have been inadequate even with a smaller menagerie. The two Asian elephants and one African elephant with Darix Togni were chained inside their transporter, by the legs, using bare chains with no padding, only coming outside at show time at 5pm. After these performances they were escorted back to their filthy trailers where they would wait until the following show. The elephants had no free access to water but were instead only provided with water at certain times. Indeed, this was the case with the majority of species observed.



Pregnant animals are forced to travel so that their babies can be used as attractions.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circuses do not teach respect or inform people about the natural behaviour of animals.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

The hippopotamus was kept in a small electric tape enclosure with a tank of water (the tank measured approximately 2 metres by 1.5 metres). This was clearly inadequate for a naturally social animal that spends most of the day in water. Likewise, the rhino had a very small pen that was obviously inadequate for the animal.

Horses, ponies, camels, llamas and similar animals are no better off. They are usually tied or kept in small stalls or tethered on short ropes. This was the case in Ireland. Indeed, most of these animals were observed tied to short tethers. These provide very limited movement – the animal can only travel a very short distance, and can never run. It also means that the animals may be restricted to the same limited piece of scrub or grassland for hours or days. During observations of Circus Vegas in Galway, for example, a donkey and a pony spent the day tied at the edge of the circus grounds without any shelter or water.

There was no discernable difference in husbandry between circuses with large menageries, such as Tom Duffy's Circus with 47 animals, and smaller ones such as Daredevil with just eleven animals in its care.

On a regular, often weekly basis, circuses will move to a new location, and the animals will endure long hours travelling in transporters - this is known to be distressing. Animals will be loaded into transporters and left inside whilst the site is dismantled, then after the journey they will remain shut inside until the new site is prepared.

On 5th March, 2000, the elephants with Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) were chained in their transporter in Dublin, leaving the transporter very briefly (a total of approximately ten minutes) to do their routine in the ring. They remained chained in the transporter overnight and at 10.45am on 6th March the circus began moving out of the site. The elephants arrived in Cork about ten hours later (at 8.25pm). On 7th March, following about 41 hours confined on their transporters, the hippo, horses, bison, goats, baby camel and its mother were released into small pens. The rhino was released from the transporter after 45 hours. On 8th March the elephants were finally let out into the open, only to be chained by two legs outside the transporter, again barely able to move. In total they were in the wagon for 67 hours with two five minute breaks. By the time they were allowed outside, it had been 59 hours since they had any access to the outside world – two and a half days chained inside a wagon with no respite.

Twelve animals from the Mexican Circus, including ponies, a camel, llamas, and a zebroid (zebra / pony crossbreed), were kept in their transporter for a total of 43 hours, 23 of which were without water. The truck measured 2.9 metres wide by 8.5 metres long.

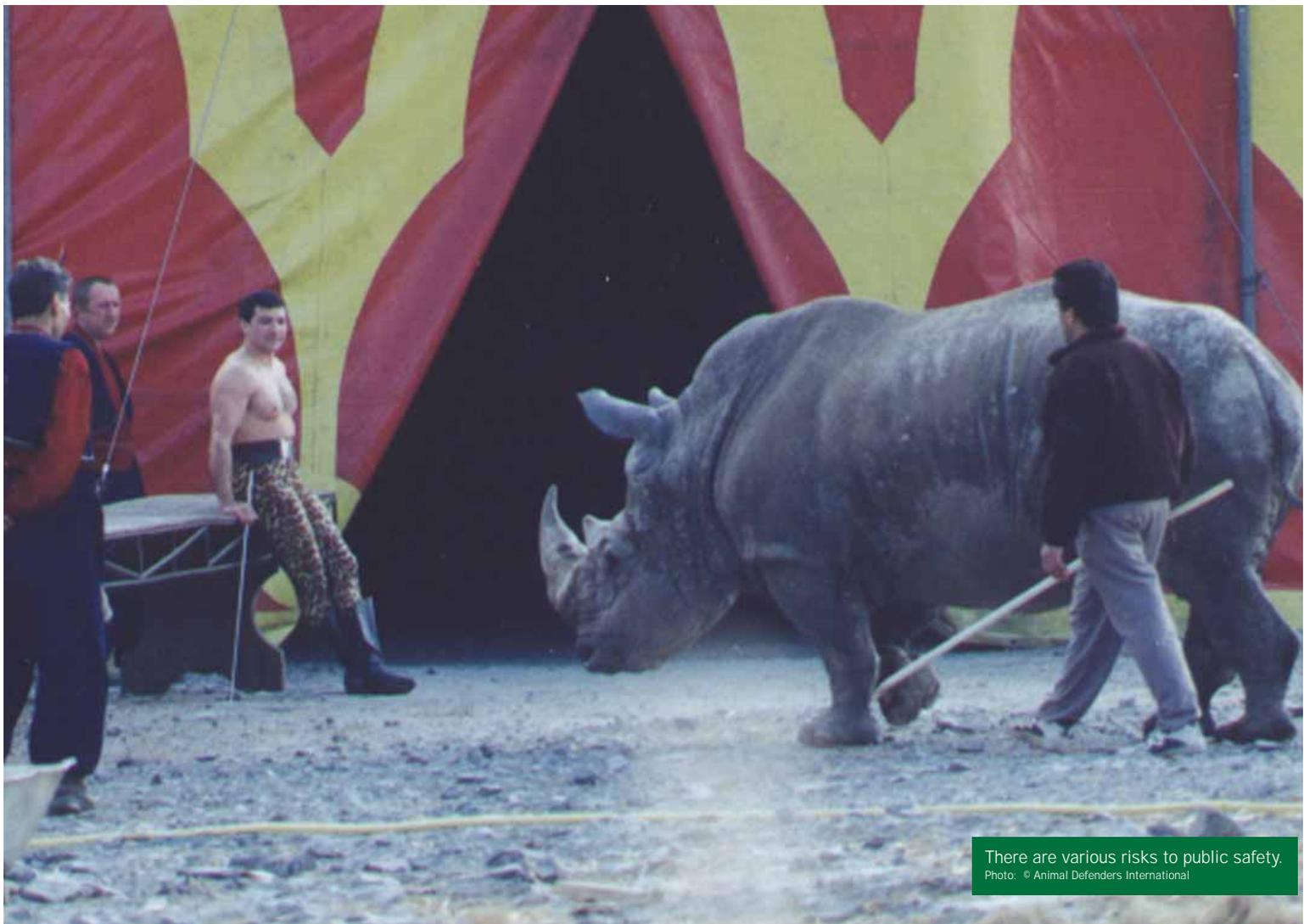
It is not uncommon for circuses to appear with baby animals. This means that heavily pregnant animals are often forced to endure long journeys and even perform. In 1997, Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) arrived at Dover, England, having made a ferry journey from France. The circus then travelled across England by road before taking the ferry to Ireland where a baby camel was born in Galway. Clearly, the circus appreciated the extra publicity and interest that this had brought because in on February 29th, 2000 another baby camel was born whilst the circus toured Ireland again. The heavily pregnant mother was even seen performing on February 17th. A camel's gestation period is 13 months, which means that the camel was over 11 months pregnant when she endured the sea and road journeys to reach Ireland that January.

## Violence and physical abuse

ADI investigations in numerous countries have found that the use of violence in the training and control of animals is a regular occurrence and part of the circus culture. Often such activity takes place behind the scenes, and it was no surprise that the most violence caught on film is when ADI Field Officers have worked undercover with circuses, or at training establishments.

ADI Field Officers secured evidence of extreme violence behind the scenes at Mary Chipperfield Promotions and began legal proceedings against three individuals. Elephant keeper, Steve Gills was jailed for his repeated attacks on the elephants, Director Roger Cawley was convicted of cruelty to a sick elephant, and Mary Cawley (nee Chipperfield) was convicted on 13 counts of cruelty to a chimpanzee. Significantly, the Cawleys defended their actions as being good industry practice, and ADI was unable to bring legal action for the beatings of animals which took place during training sessions. Within a year of the conviction of two Directors, Mary Chipperfield Promotions was supplying various animals to the Mexican Circus.

Behind the scenes at Daredevil Circus, ADI caught on film, the elephant presenter first punching the elephant in the face and then kicking her in the leg. At the same circus, a keeper repeatedly slapped a camel before hitting it in the face with a broom and jabbing its rear with a broom handle. The animal was trying to eat at the time.



There are various risks to public safety.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



An electric tape was all that stood between the public and this hippo.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

## **Stereotypic / disturbed behaviour**

Living in such impoverished unnatural conditions, it is little wonder that many of these animals go out of their minds. Frustrated, repetitive, stereotypic behaviour takes over. These pointless movements, with the animal no longer aware of its surroundings, are not witnessed in the wild, and are regarded by animal behaviourists as clear signs of distress. We call it circus madness. During this study a number of animals were seen exhibiting disturbed behaviour.

### **Elephants**

Daredevil – both elephants exhibited head bobbing and weaving stereotypic behaviour.

Fossetts Circus – the solitary elephant performed stereotypic head weaving and bobbing for a significant part of the day.

Circus Vegas – the three African elephants were observed weaving whilst chained in tents.

Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) – All three of their elephants (2 Asian & 1 African) spent a significant amount of time exhibiting stereotypic behaviour, swaying from side to side and head bobbing.

### **Camels**

Fossetts Circus – Bactrian camels were observed weaving their heads from side to side.

### **Horses**

Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) – A horse repeatedly rubbed a hind leg. If this was a problem, such as irritation to the skin, causing this, it was apparently not addressed by staff. Another horse on a short tether attached to a vehicle, was repeatedly stamping its feet up and down, as if marching on the spot, whilst at the same time throwing her head up and down.

## **Public Safety**

The temporary nature of travelling animal circuses and the close proximity of often dangerous animals to the public, means that these establishments can never be entirely safe. Around the world, circus workers and members of the public, including children, have been killed and maimed after attacks by circus animals. Lions, tigers and elephants have all escaped, and people have died as a result. Often it is just a matter of time before human error means that a cage is left open, or a temporary tunnel is not attached correctly and an animal escapes.

Circuses in Ireland are no exception to this, with dangerous animals being kept in temporary accommodation, without the secondary fence or standard of containment that is now regarded as a standard in most zoos.

Fossetts Circus used metal barriers and plastic tape around the circus, although this would not prevent children from gaining access. Daredevil Circus had a portable metal wire fence around the circus, but this was left open for circus personnel to gain access. There was no fencing around Tom Duffy's Circus. Paying visitors could reach and touch many animals at the various circuses – children have even been observed patting the hippo at Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni).

At Il Florilegio Circus (Darix Togni) staff carrying large sticks and poles moved the larger exotic animals such as the rhino, hippo and elephants from their enclosures to the ring, with no additional containment should the animals bolt. At the same circus, one morning the electric tape around the hippo was lowered in order for staff to drive a vehicle from the site. With the type of error that is typical in temporary/travelling facilities, the staff forgot to put the tape up again. The hippo saw its opportunity and wandered out towards a main road. An ADI Field Officer who was filming the events, alerted staff and the hippo was returned to its pen. It is worth noting that more people are killed by hippos every year in Africa than are killed by lions.

Circus Vegas, The American 3-Ring Circus and Daredevil Circus used their elephants during the show interval for photographs with members of the audience. Daredevil allowed very small children to sit on the Asian elephants. There are considerable concerns about these activities because they can require close control and domination of the animals by the trainer, and should the animal become frightened they can prove very dangerous (as has been seen in Florida with elephant rides running out of control).

In the past 20 months, the Irish press has carried reports of animals escaping or attacking people. An elephant with Circus New York attacked a circus employee in Tramore, County Waterford (26th June 2005). The following month, a circus monkey attacked a child. The monkey was then beaten with a stick in front of members of the public in Tralee, County Kerry (July 2005), but was back in the show that evening. Three camels with Daredevil Circus got loose from their tethers, they were recaptured in less than an hour, but still managed to hold up rush hour traffic (25th February 2004).



Life on a tether on wasteland  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



A "zebroid". A cross between a zebra and a pony - an unnatural animal created by the circus industry.  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

## About us

### **Animal Defenders International**

Founded in 1990, Animal Defenders International has offices in the UK and USA and is working worldwide to end the suffering and abuse of animals in circuses, with campaigns in Europe, South America and the USA. ADI Field Officers have made detailed observations of circuses all over the world. ADI evidence of circus suffering has led to national and local restrictions on animal circuses. Following a seven year campaign by ADI, new regulations for the cross border movements of endangered species with circuses were adopted at the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. The rules, which were designed to curb the ability of circuses to traffic in endangered species, affect over 160 countries.

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### **Animal Rights Action Network (ARAN)**

ARAN is a grassroots voice that is speaking out against all forms of cruelty to animals. We work with many national and international animal protection groups and actively support international campaigns for animal rights along with working to encourage activism among the public and volunteers alike. ARAN will be promoting the new Stop Circus Suffering campaign throughout Ireland.

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