



31 May 2011

Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
The Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
SW1A 2AA

Dear Prime Minister,

**RE: Wild animals in circuses**

We are writing to you on behalf of our hundreds of thousands of supporters urging you to ensure the coalition government reviews its recent decision not to prohibit the use of wild animals in circuses.

The reasons given by Defra Ministers for not introducing a ban – alleged legal proceedings against Austria's ban and potential infringements of the Human Rights Act – have been shown to be inaccurate. More importantly, the focus on these issues is a complete red-herring. The European Commission has made clear on numerous occasions that Member States are best placed to legislate on animal welfare, including banning the use of wild animals in circuses, by the introduction of national rules. Furthermore, the risk assessment carried out for the public consultation on this matter made it very clear that "there are no human rights issues raised by these proposals".

Anne the elephant and Monty the camel were recently rehomed from Bobby Roberts Super Circus, leaving only three circuses in the UK which continue to resist public pressure. Between them they keep an estimated 36 wild animals. The UK's continued failure to ban the outdated practice of using wild animals in circuses, whilst many other countries have already done so, undermines the UK's international reputation on animal welfare.

There has been much confusion in statements from Ministers on this matter leading to accusations that Defra Ministers have misled Parliament and the public. We believe that in order to ensure the government has the confidence of the public, circus owners and animal welfare charities it should put its plans on hold whilst it reviews this decision.

We, along with 94% of the public who responded to the public consultation on this matter, believe that the only way to ensure high animal welfare standards is to ban the use of wild animals in circuses. This is clearly both the most proportionate and effective means of protecting animals.

We believe that the majority of the public would join us in asking the government to urgently reconsider this decision and bring forward a ban.

Yours sincerely,

**Animal Aid**

**Animal Defenders International (ADI)**

**British Veterinary Association (BVA)**

**Born Free Foundation (BFF)**

**Captive Animals Protection Society (CAPS)**

**Care for the Wild International (CWI)**

**Four Paws**

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) UK**

**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)**

**World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA)**

cc. Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP (Deputy Prime Minister), Rt Hon Caroline Spelman MP (Secretary of State for Defra), Jim Paice MP (Minister of State for Defra), The Lord Henley (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Defra)