

# STOP CIRCUS SUFFERING

Animal Circuses in Portugal





Circo Atlas  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circo Atlas  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

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## 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 have launched "Stop Circus Suffering", a campaign to end the use of animals in circuses in Portugal.

This report is based on observations by ADI Field Officers of Portuguese circuses in August 2003, and June and August 2005. A total of eleven animal circuses, one 'Animal Serpent Exhibition', and one circus with no animal acts were observed during this study. At one circus, Circo Soledad Cardinali, an ADI undercover Field Officer was employed and gathered video and photographs.

In 2005, at least 342 animals were touring Portugal with travelling circuses. Our observations reveal that animals endure 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 Portugal, 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. There was inadequate provision of food and water. Other examples of unnatural and inappropriate husbandry included baboons being kept in the same beastwagon as mountain lions.

### ● **Violence used to control animals**, for example:

- elephants being jabbed and struck with metal elephant hooks;
- ponies being whipped about their bodies during training;
- a donkey being kicked;
- a pony being hit in the face;
- a pig screaming whilst a worker tried to fit a collar;
- elephants being struck about the head

● **A range of animals displaying disturbed, repetitive behaviour**, this included swaying, pacing, weaving, and head bobbing, seen in bears, chimpanzees, elephants, baboons, tigers and lions. We also observed horses trying to bite each other and a bear banging its head against the cage.

● **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 16 times longer than a journey had actually taken.

● **Poor standards of public safety** (and indeed animal safety).

These findings bring shame on Portugal.

## Circuses visited

2003: Circo Atlas, Circo Dallas, Circo Landia

2005: Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali, Circo Chen 1, Circo Chen 2, Circo Soledad Cardinali, Circo Roberto Cardinali, Circo Atlas, Circo David Cardinali, Circo Dallas, Circo Americano, Circo Magic.

One circus without animals, Circo Horacio Cardinali, was also visited – ADI and ANIMAL commend those circuses which do not use animals.



Circo Chen 2  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circo Americano  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International

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## Animals with Portuguese circuses

### Exotic / Wild Animals

Elephant	7	Lionesses/Lions	21	Zebras	2
Hippopotamus	1	Mountain Lions	2	Zebroid	1
Chimpanzees	4	Tigers	28	Camels	13
Vervet Monkeys	4	White Tigers	2	Llamas	15
Baboons	8	Brown Bears	9	Snakes	13
Yak	1	Buffalo	3	Ostriches	8
Emus	1				

**Total Exotics= 143**

### Domestic Animals

Ponies	42	Horned Cattle	20	Horses	55
Dogs	21	Donkeys	4	Ducks	5
Goats	24	Geese	7	Pygmy Goats	2
Turkeys	2	Sheep	1	Caged Birds	6
Pig	10				

**Total = 199**



## Missing animals

Of the three circuses monitored in 2003, it was possible to revisit two (Circus Atlas and Circo Dallas) in 2005 and we found significant discrepancies in the menageries.

Appearing with the Circo Atlas in 2003 but no longer on show in 2005:

Hippopotamus	1	Lions	3	Tiger	1
Zebra	1	Polar Bear	1	Racoons	2
Llamas	2	Zebroid	1	Brown Bear	1
Crocodiles	5	Pygmy Goats	15	Dogs	10
Pythons	2	Camels	2	Horned Cattle	2
Ostrich	1	Emu	1		

Circo Dallas – animals appearing with the circus in 2003 but no longer there in 2005:

Tigers	2	Pythons	3
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## 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 can have particular impacts for animals with travelling circuses. During the hottest period of August, several circuses moved to the Algarve to cash in on the peak of the tourist season (we recorded temperatures up to 32°C / 90°F). No consideration was apparently given to the animals which had to endure sweltering temperatures whilst living in metal containers on the backs of lorries.

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. This causes severe distress and mental suffering to the animals.

For lions, tigers, and bears with circuses, home 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 go to



Circo Soledad Cardinali  
Photo: © Animal Defenders Inetrnational



Exposição de Serpentes e Animais  
Photo: © Animal Defenders Inetrnational

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the toilet. This was found to be the case in Portugal, with lions and tigers living in cages on the backs of lorries. These cages had nothing to amuse the animal, some had woodchips on the floor to soak up urine, but cleaning appeared irregular with the cages in an unhygienic state. At Circo Atlas, the circus owner administered an injection to a lioness while she was in the beastwagon, without any veterinary supervision, when a qualified vet should be present for such a procedure. Primates such as monkeys and baboons were kept in the same way. These animals spent every day sitting in a barren empty cage.

Conditions at Circo Chen 1 were possibly the poorest, water trays were empty and faeces was present in all the enclosures, no bedding was supplied to any of the animals, and animals lived in crowded, cramped conditions.

Chimpanzees are our closest relatives in the animal kingdom, sharing 98% of our genetic material, using tools, maintaining family bonds and social structures. Their very survival in the wild is threatened. Three chimpanzees with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali (belonging to Jean Ferri of France) were kept in a cage on the back of a lorry. During the study, the ADI/ANIMAL team witnessed many demeaning and disturbing acts, but this chimpanzee act was one of the worst. These highly intelligent and sensitive animals, that we know can suffer as we do, were forced to perform hand stands, forward rolls, high wire walking, and one chimp was spun around on the top of a steel pole. At Circo Soledad Cardinali, a chimpanzee was kept in complete isolation from its own species. Chimpanzees are recognised as having comparable intelligence to a small child and social contact is vital for them – like so many animals with circuses in Portugal, this chimpanzee is being tortured with loneliness.

Elephants are the largest animals walking the earth, and in the wild 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.

The seven African elephants with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali were chained by the legs using bare chains with no padding, all day by until show time at 5pm. After these performances they were allowed minimal exercise in an enclosure measuring 39 metres by 26.5 metres. 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.

In some African countries game wardens have given their lives attempting to protect these magnificent animals from poachers. Could there be a starker contrast in mankind's relationship with animals, our duties, and our responsibilities than the way these animals are treated in Portugal?

Horses, ponies, camels, llamas and similar animals are no better off. They are usually tied or kept in small stalls, on short ropes. This was the case in Portugal. A particularly malnourished looking pony and very thin horses were seen at Circo Chen 2 and Circo Dallas. If it is difficult to tell if these animals were elderly, sick, or starving, but we can say with certainty that they should not have been on tour with circuses.

At Circo Americano a pony was filmed with a large open wound on the front right leg covered in flies. At Circo Dallas, a horse was filmed with blood running down its forehead.

At Circo Roberto Cardinali some ponies appeared to be actually living in the back of a lorry – not just being transported in it.

In addition the circus ignores the natural habitat, even the climate, and natural behaviour of these animals. Shy and solitary animals endure the constant gaze of visitors. Herd animals, where companionship of their own species is so important, are often kept alone. In 2003 a solitary polar bear with Circo Atlas was filmed lying in a cramped beastwagon in appalling conditions. In the searing heat, it only had an electric fan for relief.

The hippopotamus with Circo Chen 1 was kept inside a trailer which contained a small water tank, with a small outdoor section - a wholly inadequate environment.

On a regular, often weekly basis, the circus will move on, 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 16th June 2005 Circo Soledad Cardinali was moving to another location. The journey took just one hour, but five goats, two horses, four ponies and a donkey were kept in their transporter for a total of 16 hours. Even worse is that many animals in the circuses observed never left their transporters at all except to perform.

Several circuses travelled with animals which did not perform. These included two monkeys, a bear, a mountain lion, a tiger and two lions with Circo Roberto Cardinali and six tigers with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali. These animals are living in substandard, mobile zoos.

There was no discernible difference in husbandry between the circuses with large menageries, such as Circo Dallas with 63 animals, and Circo Magic with just five animals in its care.



Circo Atlas  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circo Chen  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



## 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 during this study was at Circo Soledad Cardinali where an ADI Field Officer worked undercover with unrestricted access.

Elephants were abused with a sharp 'elephant hook'. They were jabbed and prodded, including around their faces, to force them to form a line.

During a training session one particular pony was repeatedly whipped, punched and slapped during a training session to make it stand on its hind legs and walk.

Donkeys were slapped in the face by circus personnel for entertainment; they also endured other various kicks from staff for no apparent reason.

## 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 large number of animals were seen exhibiting disturbed behaviour.

Bears with Circo Magic and Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali were kept in small cages on the backs of lorries and displayed a considerable amount of stereotypic behaviour including head bobbing, weaving, pacing and running on the spot. A polar bear with Circo Atlas (2003) swayed and paced back and forth.

Elephants with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali all displayed some stereotypic behaviour. At times all seven elephants were exhibiting this unnatural behaviour at the same time. Again we would stress that such pointless repetitive movements are not seen in the wild, so for all seven elephants in one circus to be so severely mentally scarred in this way indicates just how inappropriate the circus environment is for these animals.

Chimpanzees with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali performed head bobbing close to the wall of their cage and demonstrated frustration by banging on the bars. Baboons, another primate naturally requiring considerable mental and emotional stimulation, were reduced to pacing their cages – again with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali.

Tigers and lions with Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali, Circo Montecarlo, Circo Chen 1 and also Circo Dallas, exhibited stereotypic behaviour including repeated pacing.

## 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.

Portugal is no exception. We noted little action taken to protect the visiting public from the animals (or indeed the animals from members of the public). Some circuses had secondary fencing in front of cages but gates were often left open or there was no supervision. White tigers (Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali) were paraded in circus shows with no caging to protect the public. At Circo Roberto Cardinali, children were able to give the monkeys plastic bottles, bread and cardboard.

At Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali there were no warning signs and a gate was left open. It was possible for anyone to approach the seven African elephants unsupervised. At Circo Chen 1, there was a zoo area for visitors to view the animals, but this was not supervised.



Circo Roberto Cardinali  
Photo: © Animal Defenders International



Circo Victor Hugo Cardinali  
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, Scandinavia, 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.

#### Animal Defenders International

261 Goldhawk Road, London W12 9PE, UK

Tel. +44 (0)20 8846 9777

Fax. +44 (0)20 8846 9712

e: [info@ad-international.org](mailto:info@ad-international.org)

[www.ad-international.org](http://www.ad-international.org)

## 12. ANIMAL

ANIMAL, founded in 1994 in Porto but conducting much of its activity in Lisbon and throughout all the country, is a partner of ADI in the international campaign to end the use of animals in circuses worldwide. In Portugal, ANIMAL is one of the largest and most active animal rights organisations, campaigning not only against animal circuses, but also against bullfights, rodeos, dog and other animal fights, pigeon shooting, zoos, the fur industry, vivisection and the use and exploitation of animals for food. ANIMAL's high profile campaigns, initiatives and court cases have, over the years, turned Portugal from a nation indifferent to the suffering of animals into a nation which is increasingly aware, concerned and active in defense of animals.

#### ANIMAL

Rua Ferreira Borges, n.º 64 - 2.º Frt.

4050-252 Porto, Portugal

Phone: (00 351) 222 038 640

Fax: (00 351) 222 038 639

e: [info@animal.org.pt](mailto:info@animal.org.pt)

[www.animal.org.pt](http://www.animal.org.pt)

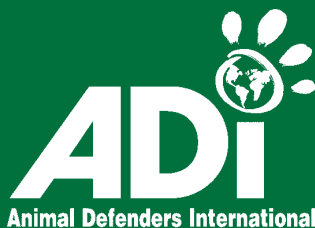


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ASSOCIAÇÃO

Rua Ferreira Borges, n.º 64 - 2.º Frt.  
4050-252 Porto, Portugal

Phone: (00 351) 222 038 640 Fax: (00 351) 222 038 639  
info@animal.org.pt www.animal.org.pt



Animal Defenders International

261 Goldhawk Road, London W12 9PE, UK  
Tel. +44 (0)20 8846 9777 Fax. +44 (0)20 8846 9712  
e: info@ad-international.org www.ad-international.org