



A political party for people and animals

Animals Count response to DEFRA Circus consultation
20 February 2010

1. Do you think that there are any species of wild animal which it is acceptable to use in travelling circuses? If so, which and why?

No

2. Do you think that a ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses is the best option to achieve consistently better welfare standards for such animals?

Yes

3. If a complete ban were introduced, how much time do you think travelling circuses should be given to stop using their wild animals?

3 months

4. If a complete ban were introduced, what do you think should happen to the animals at the time the ban becomes effective?

Animals should be re-homed (for example, to a zoo or sanctuary)

5. Do you think that travelling circuses should be prevented from obtaining any further wild animals?

Yes

6. If a complete ban were introduced, how often do you think travelling circuses should be inspected to ensure compliance?

Every location

7. How do you think a complete ban on wild animals might affect the revenue of the travelling circuses affected?

No change

8. Do you think that wild animals from travelling circuses have skills which make them more suitable than other animals for work in the audiovisual industry? Why?

No,

The learned behaviours are often context-specific, and what may (seem to) work in a circus with a familiar trainer may not make these animals 'suitable' to other stressful and unnatural conditions. Wild animals do not belong in the audiovisual industry. They are not domesticated animals who have interacted with humans for thousands of years. They still retain many of their wild behavioural needs which cannot be met in any 'entertainment industry'.

9. Do you think that a complete ban on wild animals in travelling circuses could have an impact on other industries?

Yes

It would set an example that there is no education or conservation value in wild animals performing learned behaviour for our 'entertainment'. The current situation with regard to dolphinariums not operating in the UK would be maintained, and any other performances carried out in zoos or other establishments could be banned as well. Making wild animals perform certain behaviour is demeaning, and does not teach respect for the natural and awesome capacities of wild animals. We will learn to respect wild animals by observing natural wild animal behaviour, in the wild, or via documentaries.

10. Do you think that travelling circus employees undergoing training would be an appropriate measure to help raise the standard of welfare of wild animals in circuses?

Yes

11. Do you think that travelling circus owners should have to produce , on demand, veterinary records for the wild animals performing in their circus?

Yes

12. Do you think that visits from an appropriately trained inspector would safeguard the welfare for wild animals in travelling circuses?

No

13. If visits were required, what should be the minimum circus inspection frequency per year?

Why?

Every location,

The welfare of animals is not a fixed feature. The health and welfare status of animals depend on different circumstances (internal and external factors), hence inspection visits would need to be made at every location to monitor the individual welfare of each animal.

14. Do you think that inspectors should undertake unannounced inspections of travelling circuses?

Yes

15. Do you think that a code of practice for keeping wild animals in travelling circuses could effectively safeguard their welfare? If yes, who do you think should write such a code?

Other

A code of practice will not 'safeguard' welfare. It could be used in court to demonstrate a case where the circus owner did not comply with the code, but the written guidance itself does not safeguard high welfare status of individuals on an ongoing basis. Animals Count believes wild animals do not belong in circuses because their needs cannot be adequately met all of the time. If a code of practice is drawn up (as an interim measure only until a complete ban is in place), it should be drafted by a team comprising all of the above-mentioned organisations/bodies.

16. Do you think that the hours and the environment in which animals travel should be restricted? If yes, what should these restrictions be?

Yes

The current travel arrangements are inadequate and cause stress to some degree in all wild animals. The only travel permitted should be the one-off travel to a sanctuary where the animals should be rehomed.

17. Do you think that circuses themselves are best placed to regulate welfare standards for wild animals in travelling circuses?

No

18. If self-regulation is supported, should a regulatory body be accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service or an equivalent body (please state)?

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19. Do you think the use of no more than 50 wild animals in travelling circuses merits action? If yes, what action?

Yes,

Yes, a ban needs to be introduced. The current number of no more than 50 animals is low for two reasons: costs, and the fact that a majority of the public think it is cruel to keep wild animals in circuses. The circus industry needs a final encouragement to switch completely to non-animal circuses which can provide similar if not superior entertainment for people (and by people).

20. Do you think that there is an existing body that is appropriate to enforce any regulations on the use of wild animals in circuses? If so, which and why?

No