



Animal Defenders International

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Kim Jett with Animal Defenders International; in strong support of HB 3214

Thank you to Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallan, members of the committee, and Rep. Hudson for sponsoring this important bill.

ADI's evidence and studies over the past thirty years has shown that even with the best of intentions, traveling circuses simply cannot provide wild and exotic animals what they need to maintain their physical and psychological health. Welfare is always compromised.

Traveling shows are constantly on the move and therefore, out of necessity, animal accommodations must be small, lightweight, collapsible, and easy to transport. For the animals, this means long periods of confinement in small, barren spaces with nothing to engage them.

Lions and tigers have been found to spend 75-99% of their time in cages barely larger than the animals themselves. Elephants have been found to spend 58-98% of their time chained by at least one leg, more commonly by both a front and a hind leg, only able to take one step forward or back.

Physical and social deprivation; boredom; brutal control methods and physical violence result in chronic stress and abnormal stereotypic behaviors, such as repetitive pacing, swaying, or head bobbing.

Such behaviors are not seen in the wild and indicate the animal is not coping with its environment.

Additional stressors for animals in shows include noise; lights; careless positioning of prey animals in sight of predators; inappropriate social groupings, and public contact.

Captivity does not alter the nature of wild and exotic animals in traveling shows. Stress can make them unpredictable and dangerous. Although all animals in circuses suffer, ADI studies and investigations reveal workers' heightened levels of violence toward wild animals, often linked to the animals' unwillingness to comply, and workers' fear when handling them.

It is a myth that circus animals are trained with kindness and reward.

Circus animals perform through fear, not enjoyment and are routinely subjected to brutal training methods and violence. Wherever ADI has conducted an undercover investigation we have documented acts of abuse. Tools of the trade include whips, shovels, pitchforks, iron bars, bull hooks (heavy bars with a sharpened point and hook), and electric shock devices; most anything will suffice as a weapon.

Wild animals living in a state of severe stress, confinement, and abuse are at high risk of lashing out, or trying to escape. Circus workers, and members of the public, including children, have been killed and maimed by circus animals – lions, tigers, and elephants have all escaped.

Common circus working practices increase the likelihood of such incidents by bringing people into dangerously close proximity to wild animals. Any animal can be unpredictable, especially when stressed or upon seeing an opportunity to escape its confinement.

ADI has shown that regulation and attempts to set standards do not work, because of the constantly moving nature of the circuses. Problems can be concealed from inspectors, and a brief visit from an inspector does not reveal long-term suffering or abuse.

Many circuses lease their animal acts, which further complicates oversight, as exhibitors can claim they're not responsible for, or mislead the public regarding violations related to animals they may exhibit, but don't actually own.

Parents purchasing tickets for their children to take photos with tigers or to ride on an elephant's back have no way of knowing the animal's history, training, escape risk, stressors, anxiety level, triggers, injury, illness, or aggression.

To prohibit wild/exotic animals in circuses altogether is less costly and more easily enforced than current regulatory oversight, which is problematic and ineffective.

Prohibiting the use of certain animals does not mean the end of the circus. Our studies show that, in a typical two-hour show, wild animals appear for less than 15 minutes.

Like all businesses, these shows need to change with the times to stay relevant and profitable. An educated public prefers to see humane entertainment; while animal circus attendance is in decline, human-performance shows like Cirque du Soleil prove that circuses don't need to use animals to succeed, showing that there is an expanding market for human circus performances. Human-performance circuses are popular; create jobs, are great fundraisers, and can bring dollars to communities without exposing citizens to chronically stressed and abused animals.

Public opposition to traveling animal acts is growing; >2/3 of Americans say they're concerned about the use of animals in circuses (2015 Gallup poll, at <http://www.gallup.com/poll/183275/say-animals-rights-people.aspx>); fifty diverse nations have banned such acts, and >100 US jurisdictions in 34 states have passed some form of ban or restriction. New Jersey, Hawaii, California, and Colorado have banned such acts statewide. Please support HB3214, to protect animals and the citizens of Oregon.

Thank you.