

Why NOT attend the circus?

Wild animals in circuses suffer for mere entertainment. The inherent cruelty of traveling almost every week a year, forced separation of herds and babies, being chained while not performing, restrictive caging, and coercive training methods are just a few of the reasons why the MSPCA does not believe circuses that use wild animals are humane.

Few legal protections exist for animals who are displayed in circuses. On the federal level, the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) requires that minimum standards of care and treatment be provided to warm-blooded animals traveling with circuses. However, violations of the AWA are anything but infrequent.



Chaining is one of the most common methods used to confine elephants, severely restricting an movements including lying down, walking, or socializing with other elephants. They are typically chained all day except when performing or immediately prior to show time. As a result, the elephants are forced to stand in their own feces and urine exposing their skin, feet, and pads to a variety of bacteria that can result in or exacerbate joint/foot/pad infections and other ailments .

Animals in circuses spend up to 11 months of the year traveling. For thousands of hours, over long distances, they may be chained, transported in vehicles that lack climate control, and forced to stand or lie in their own waste.

Performing animals such as elephants, lions, and tigers endure years of physical and psychological suffering. The tricks that animals are forced to perform - night after night - are frightening, unnatural, and even painful. Standard circus industry practice is to use bullhooks (see below) and other objects to poke, prod, strike, shock, and hit animals in order to "train" them — all for a few moments of human amusement.

Sometimes the animals respond aggressively to this abuse, injuring their handlers, trainers, and even the public. They occasionally escape from the transport vehicles or their temporary enclosures, risking potentially fatal traffic accidents and injuries to themselves and others. For a list of circus animal incidents, see [Born Free USA United with Animal Protection Institute's website](#). There has not yet been a recorded incident in Massachusetts, but there is no reason it couldn't happen here. Undoubtedly, the problems that lead to these incidents happen everywhere.

Circuses using animals often boast that they are working to conserve endangered species in the wild and are educating the public about these animals – both assertions are untrue. There is far more money to be made in breeding endangered animals for public display and performance – which have no educational value as they are so different from life in the wild – than in addressing the real issues, such as habitat degradation, that threaten wild populations. Endangered animals born in circus "conservation" programs have never been released into the wild.



The bullhook is used to hook, hit ,and poke an elephant in order to dominate over the animal to force her to engage in a desired behavior, such as performing tricks.

How You Can Help

- 1) Do not attend circuses that feature wild animals or participate in wild animal "rides".** Instead choose animal-free circuses or visit animal sanctuaries.
- 2) Learn more about animal protection, animal habitats and circuses by visiting the following organizations' websites:** www.elephants.com, www.pawsweb.org, www.humanesociety.org or www.bornfreeusa.org
- 3) Spread the word.** Write letters to the editors of your local newspapers. Educate your relatives, friends, co-workers and local businesses about your research. Encourage them to take a stand against circuses.
- 4) Support Local Bans.** You can help stop circuses that feature wild animals from coming to your town by working to pass a local ordinance which restricts wild animal acts. Quincy, Revere, Braintree, Weymouth, Provincetown, and Somerville, Mass. have all passed ordinances prohibiting circuses within their boundaries. Contact us at advocacy@mspca.org to find out how.

JOIN THE MSPCA'S ANIMAL ACTION TEAM: www.mspca.org/JoinTheTeam