



# Circus: Culture for Millions!

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To whom it may concern

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The European Circus Association strongly objects the Wild Animals in Circuses Bill planned in England. Based on scientific evidence, the European Circus Association believes that any kind of animals can be kept in travelling circuses as long as strict regulations are fulfilled.

The European Circus Association (ECA) was established to unite Europe's circuses in order to promote and preserve circus arts and culture as part of Europe's cultural heritage. ECA is a non-profit organization. Its members include circus owners and directors, festivals, animal trainers and artists as well as other organizations representing the same interests. Together the ECA believes we can ensure that the circus continues to enchant, educate and entertain children of all ages. This includes all kinds of circus, travelling or permanent, big or small, involving varying mixes of artistic displays, acrobatics, comedy and trained animals. Circus comes in many forms. Altogether they provide culture for millions!

Traditionally, trained animals are a popular element of most circus shows. When Philip Astley created the first modern circus back in England 1768, riders and horses were the starting point. Until today the vast majority wants to see animals in the circus. A recent survey in Germany, for example, found that 85,5% of the population likes to see one or another kind of animals in the circus.

In times when natural environments of wildlife have become endangered, it is important to take charge of the animals in manmade environments. Close encounters with animals can support a better understanding of their needs and beauty. The circus can do this better than any stationary zoo, because circus animals are educated and stimulated in their physical, mental and intellectual development. The circus enriches their life. No other animal, for example, is better gymnasticised than a High School horse. Working with the animals stimulates their intelligence, cares for occupation, offers challenges and rewards, keeping the animals fit and agile. Circus animals have positive experiences. Every day.

The European Circus Association expects its members to guarantee flawless husbandry for their charges and to observe certain standards when working with animals:

- adequate accommodation that respects the animals' individual social behavior
- transport according to the needs of the species
- a day to day occupation that offers surprises, challenges and changes for the animals
- a balanced diet based on the scientific findings of nutritional physiology
- comprehensive care (e.g. clean, comb, brush, shave, chiropody etc.), including veterinary care
- training and presentation only in a way corresponding to their dignity and nature
- abandonment of certain species that cannot be kept according to their specific needs

It is an artistic choice by the circus directors whether or not they want to present animals in their shows. The European Circus Association fights for their right to make this choice.

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The planned Wild Animals in Circuses Bill is an attack not only against a cultural heritage, against honest, law-abiding circus owners (law-abiding in regard particularly to the animal-welfare legislation), against highly knowledgeable and skilled animal trainers, but also against serious, conscientious, hard working and engaged veterinarians (official and/or privately employed ones), whose business it is to care for, oversee and control the well-being of circus animals, their keeping conditions and their training.

There are several examples in Europe that show that licensing systems combined with strict regulations can work. The best of these examples are France, Germany and Switzerland. In all of these cases, animal trainers first of all need a license ("Certificat de Capacité" in France, "§ 11" permission in Germany) granted by the veterinary authorities. Regular controls, in many cases carried out in each city the circus visits, make sure that strict regulations are fulfilled and the animals kept and handled according to the rules.

The European Circus Association is convinced that the proposed Wild Animals in Circuses Bill would not stand up to a review by the European Court of Justice as it is arbitrarily and out of proportion. It bans animal trainers that are licensed to work with their animals elsewhere in the European Union to fulfill their job in England. And it contradicts with the human rights of free movement and choice of job. More than anything else, however, this bill tries to dictate the ethical ideas of a minority onto the majority of British people who probably would love to be entertained by circuses with (wild) animals like the thousands all across Europe who buy their tickets every day! If introduced, the European Circus Association will support any legal action to fight this bill and have it repealed.

The ban would be a clear discrimination of the circus compared to other kinds of animals breeding and keeping in human care – public and private – that would still be perfectly allowed. Given the ethical arguments, however, such discrimination would not stand very long. Prohibition of other animals in human care would have to follow sooner or later and the estrangement between man and animal would increase more and more. Furthermore, the distinction between "wild" and "domesticated" animals is just a *fictio iuris* (a legal abstraction) and to base the ban on this distinction is part of this discrimination.

We kindly ask all of you concerned with this bill not to let it pass.

European Circus Association