

Received answer

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Animal Concern Advice Line

2. Title
Mr

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John

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9. Permissions - I am responding as
Group/Organisation

13. The name and address of your organisation WILL BE made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Scottish Government web site). Are you content for your response to be made available

Yes

14. We will share your responses internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for the Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

15. It would be helpful for our analysis if you could indicate which of the sectors you most align yourself/your organisation with the purpose of this consultation (please tick one)

Animal welfare organisation

17. Consultation Question 1: Do you believe that the exhibitions and performances required of wild animals in travelling circuses compromise respect for the animals concerned? Why?

Yes

18. Comments

Even the very best travelling circuses are restricted by the amount of equipment they can carry and the amount of space they can provide for their animals. Some circuses only pitch up for two or three days and often can only provide their animals with very small tented stalls. After three days they are loaded back into their cramped beast wagons and transported maybe a hundred miles or more by road and perhaps ferry to their next venue.

I have monitored travelling circuses in Scotland for over 30 years and I have witnessed many acts of cruel neglect.

At Perth I saw a bear which was literally mad and far too distressed to perform. It was living out its existence in a cage half the size of a transport container.

I once sneaked behind the scenes at the Christmas circus at the SECC and photographed elephants chained by two legs in a tent on the tarmac car park. Apart from performing in the ring I reckoned they were chained 23 hours a day. When I questioned owner Bobby Roberts about this live on a BBC Radio Scotland debate he was very pleased and proud to tell me I was wrong and the week before his elephants had been taken for an hour long walk around the SECC site. Apart from performing in the ring that one hour walk around a car park was the only exercise they had been given in nearly a week.

Another year, acting on a tip-off from a Government employee, I went to an old farm near the Marley Tiles factory on the outskirts of Bishopbriggs and found that Bobby Roberts was keeping all his animals in a derelict barn between the end of his summer/autumn tour and the Christmas circus in Glasgow. The animals had been kept there for circa 12 weeks and at least one, a camel I believe, had died. The elephants were chained in windowless stalls where their tails touched the rear wall and their trunks the front wall. If a zoo kept animals like this they could have been prosecuted but because this was a travelling circus they were exempt from such legislation. This situation went on for two or three years until the barns were demolished. That year the animals were kept inside an old warehouse in the east end of Glasgow.

Another year and at a summer circus (in Bellahouston Park, Glasgow) the animals (camels, a zebra and some horses) were kept in small tented stalls where they literally did not have enough space to turn around.

At another circus in Perth I witnessed a troupe of husky type dogs being taken from the big top and loaded into cages in the back of a windowless van. When I criticised the circus for keeping dogs in the darkness in cages in a van I was rebuked and corrected. The van was not dark inside as it had a translucent roof.

Unlike dogs taken out for the day to a dog show or police dog agility display, or horses taken to a one or three day event, and then taken home afterwards, that windowless van was not just a means of transport - it was where these dogs lived for perhaps eight months of the year. Keeping dogs under such conditions is every bit as wrong as keeping elephants chained in stalls on a tarmac car park. It is extremely regrettable that the Scottish Government is not considering banning the use of all animals in travelling circus.

At Ingliston, Edinburgh and Queens Park, Glasgow an Italian touring circus appeared with various animals including big cats and a hippo. The circus left Edinburgh early under a hail of criticism and turned up in Glasgow without the necessary entertainments license. I paid them an undercover visit and had I wanted to I could have released the animals which were left unguarded in unlocked beast wagons at the side of the road in a built-up area. Conditions at that circus were so bad that when I appeared before the very pro animal act Glasgow licensing committee I was able to persuade them not to issue an entertainments licence.

Legislating to keep exotic/wild animals (or better still all animals) out of travelling circuses in Scotland would be a progressive a

19. Consultation Question 2: Do you believe that the exhibitions and performances required of wild animals in travelling circuses have an adverse impact on the development of respectful and responsible attitudes towards animals in children and young people? Why?

Yes

20. Comments

Seeing animals perform in the ring, watching them in their cramped stalls after the show and perhaps paying to have their picture taken with an old crippled elephant, gives kids and young people a totally wrong impression of how animals should be treated. TV and the internet can educate young people about how animals should be treated and how we must do all we can to protect them in their natural environment. Animals are not here to provide an hour of dubious entertainment.

21. Consultation Question 3: Do you consider that concerns relating to respect for animals could be resolved without banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. If so how?

No

22. Comments

It is totally impossible to provide animals with more than a very basic existence in a travelling circus.

23. Consultation Question 4: Do you believe that the ability of none, some, or all wild animals to undertake natural behaviours are compromised within the travelling circus environment? Which species? Which needs? Why?

All

24. Comments

Animals (wild/exotic and domestic) should not live their lives in chains, cages and cramped stalls. Can an elephant dust bathe on the SECC car park? Can a zebra, camel or for that matter a horse wander and graze when tethered in a tiny stall on a public park? Can a dog chase a ball or even wag its tail when caged in the back of a windowless van? To be anthropomorphic about it - you could exist if kept in a six foot cubed cell, provided with food and water and mucked out once a day. You could exist but you would have no quality of life.

25. Consultation Question 5: Do you consider that it is possible to facilitate the natural behaviour of none, some, or all wild animals within the travelling circus environment? Which species? How?

None

26. Comments

Restrains on space and facilities make it impossible to provide anything approaching a natural environment.

27. Consultation Question 6: Do you consider that the concerns raised surrounding the travelling environment could be resolved without banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses? How?

No

28. Comments

Restrains on space and facilities make it impossible to provide anything approaching a natural environment.

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29. Consultation Question 7: Do you consider that there are any benefits to be gained from having wild animals in travelling circuses? What are they?
 No
31. Consultation Question 8: Do you believe that there are sufficient benefits to justify the potential compromise to the wider well-being of wild animals kept in the travelling circus? Why?
 No
33. Consultation Question 9: Do you consider that the potential conflict between compromising the well-being of wild animals and obtaining any benefit could be resolved without banning the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. If so how?
 No
36. Number in last 5 years
 circa 10
37. Number in last 12 months
 2
39. Comments
 I'm not sure of how many circuses have visited Scotland with wild/exotic animals recently but as explained earlier I believe the welfare of domestic animals such as dogs and horses is also compromised in travelling circuses. I'm also greatly concerned that as other European countries ban animal act circuses we will find more of them coming here.
40. Consultation Question 11: What effect do you think a ban on the use and exhibition of wild animals would have on the revenue of such circuses? Why?
 Don't know
41. Comments
 It is up to the circus owner to provide shows that will sell. Some modern, human only circuses have done very well while others have failed. This probably has nothing to do with not having animals. High action human only circuses using venues like rock concert halls can attract big ticket sales while sad, run-down traditional circus (with or without animals) struggle to break even.
42. Consultation Question 12: If a ban on the use and exhibition of wild animals was imposed, do you think that such circuses would still visit Scotland without the wild animals? Why?
 Don't know
43. Comments
 Again it is up to the circus owner to create a show that will attract an audience. If they cannot do that without animals they perhaps do not have enough imagination to stay in the business.
44. Consultation Question 13: What effect do you think a ban on the use and exhibition of wild animals in travelling circuses would have on the revenue of other types of circuses (e.g. static or those travelling without wild animals)? Why?
 Increase
45. Comments
 I think we would end up with fewer circuses but these would contain the best human acts and have a better chance of being profitable.
47. Comments
 To be perfectly honest this, like several other questions, could do with a "Don't care" option. If people cannot make a profit without exploiting animals in the way that circuses do then that's just tough.
48. Consultation Question 15: Do you consider that a ban on wild animals in travelling circuses could have an impact on other industries? If so, which industries, what would be the effect and why?
 Film
 No impact
 TV - drama
 No impact
 TV - documentary
 Don't know
 TV - childrens
 No impact
 Advertising - TV
 Positive impact
 Advertising - other
 Positive impact
49. Comments
 It might have a positive influence on advertising by stopping advertisers making the mistake of using circus animals in their adverts.
50. Consultation Question 16: Do you agree that the use of wild animals for performance in travelling circuses should be banned in Scotland? Why?
 Yes
51. Comments
 For all the previous reason given.
52. Consultation Question 17: Do you agree that the use of wild animals for exhibition in travelling circuses should be banned in Scotland? Why?
 Yes
53. Comments
 Because if the animals are not performing it becomes a zoo and it is a criminal offence to keep zoo animals in the way that animals are kept in travelling circuses.
54. Consultation Question 18: Do you consider that any ban should be a blanket ban on all wild animals in travelling circuses? Why?
 Yes
55. Comments
 I cannot think of any wild animal other than perhaps some insects which could be given any real quality of life if kept in a travelling circus.
56. Consultation Question 19: Do you consider that any specific species of animal not commonly domesticated in the British Islands should be permitted to be used in travelling circuses in Scotland? If so, which species and why?
 No
57. Comments
 I cannot think of any wild animal other than perhaps some insects which could be given any real quality of life if kept in a travelling circus.
58. Consultation Question 20: Do you consider that there are key species that should be covered by a ban in the event that a blanket ban could not be achieved? If so, which species and why?
 Yes
59. Comments
 Big cats, elephants, bears, hippos, primates. None of these animals can be given more than a basic existence in travelling circuses and all of these animals can be driven mad/made more dangerous by being kept in close confinement.
60. Consultation Question 21: Do you have any other comments on whether/how the use of wild animals in travelling circuses should be banned from Scotland?
 Yes
61. Comments
 While a blanket ban on the keeping of any wild or exotic animals in travelling circuses should be a minimum objective I would like to see the use of all animals, domestic and exotic, made illegal.
62. Consultation Question 22: Do you consider that the consultation paper explained the key issues sufficiently for you to properly consider your responses?
 Don't know
63. Comments
 I doubt if anyone can cover all the bases!
64. Consultation Question 23: Do you consider that you had sufficient time to respond to the consultation?
 Yes
66. Consultation Question 24: Do you have any other comments on the way this consultation has been conducted?
 No

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