

PETA UK answer guide to the Scottish government consultation: "Should the use of wild animals in travelling circuses be banned in Scotland?"



Below are PETA UK's suggested responses to help you answer the Scottish government consultation on the use of wild animals in circuses. Please answer as many questions as you are able to. However, if you are pressed for time, we encourage you to complete the multiple-choice sections as the most important. If you can, please personalise your responses.

The deadline for responses is 16 April.

The consultation can be completed [online](#).

Part 1: Respect for Animals

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. Wild animals in circuses endure poor care, chronic health problems and abusive treatment and also exhibit psychological disorders and aberrant behaviour, including aggression. In addition, they die prematurely. They are deprived of everything that is natural and important to them, are kept in cages or pens, have their spirits broken and are isolated, shackled, lonely, degraded and bored. Pacing, bar-biting, circling and self-mutilation are common among performing animals. It is now recognised that such neurotic behaviour is caused by captivity and an unnatural lifestyle, which are clearly in direct conflict with promoting respect for animals.

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. Exposing children and young people to the abuse of animals in the circus industry teaches them that it's acceptable to dominate, whip, chain and beat other living, feeling beings who experience the pain of the whips and the stress of confinement to the same extent that we would. Obviously, these things are not acceptable, and such lessons in insensitivity are not what most parents would knowingly want to teach their children.

Furthermore, experts in early childhood development have recommended against taking children to circuses that force animals to perform after finding that such acts inhibit a child's ability to develop empathy towards both humans and animals alike by teaching them that other living beings are merely objects to be manipulated for their own enjoyment.

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. There is simply no humane way to use animals in circuses. In addition to being subjected to premature maternal separation, the constant threat of physical punishment and prolonged and unnatural confinement, these animals are deprived of the opportunity to satisfy virtually all their species-specific needs and instincts. The use of wild animals in circuses must be banned because the welfare problems experienced by animals in travelling circuses are inherent and cannot be corrected by any change in practice.

Part 2: Travelling Environment

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. Circuses cannot adequately provide for the unique physical, social and psychological needs of any species of wild animals or provide an environment that is well suited to their natural behaviour.

Elephants are highly intelligent, possess exceptional memory, are self-aware and express emotions such as joy, anger, grief, sympathy and playfulness. Tigers are apex predators with home ranges of hundreds of square miles in the wild, yet circuses force them to live most of their lives in transport cages that are barely bigger than their own bodies.

In the wild, grazing animals such as zebras and camels spend a large part of their day eating. Circuses cannot provide permanent outdoor paddocks for grazing, so these animals spend much of their time confined to indoor stalls or tied to transport vehicles. In addition, in travelling circuses, social species, such as elephants, are often kept in isolation, while animals who are naturally solitary, such as tigers, are commonly kept in groups.

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. Please see the comments on Question 4.

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. The use of wild animals in circuses must be banned because the welfare problems experienced by animals in travelling circuses are inherent in their use and cannot be corrected by any change in practice. Extreme confinement and physical stress during transport – in combination with the use of psychologically and possibly physically abusive training methods – inevitably compromise the welfare of these animals.

Abuse begins at an early age for elephants in travelling shows. In December 2009, PETA US released a declaration and photographs taken by a retired Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus employee, Sam Haddock, who was involved in training baby elephants for Ringling, the largest circus in the US, which also travels to Europe. The dozens of photographs that Haddock gave to PETA US reveal the forcible and also physically and psychologically abusive training methods that Ringling uses on baby elephants. According to Haddock, these cruel methods are the only way that an elephant can be trained to perform in circuses.

In the UK, Animal Defenders International (ADI) released undercover video footage in August 2009 documenting that elephants in a circus exhibited a pattern of disturbed, abnormal behaviour, such as rocking, swaying and head-bobbing. Animal behaviourists believe that these movements are signs that an animal is suffering and unable to cope with his or her situation. ADI's investigations reinforce that the suffering uncovered by PETA US' Ringling probe is not specific to the US but endemic in the industry.

Part 3: Ethical Costs and Benefits

Question 7: Do you consider that there are any benefits to be gained from having wild animals in travelling circuses? What are they?

No. It is a well-established fact that suffering is inherent in the use of wild animals in circuses, which is why this archaic form of entertainment has no place in a civilised society. There is nothing to be gained from forcing animals to perform in an unnatural environment. In 2010, 94.5 per cent of respondents to a Defra consultation voted in favour of an outright ban on all wild animals in travelling circuses. A multitude of countries have banned the use of cruel training tools, such as bullhooks, whips and electric prods in circuses – or have banned the exhibition of exotic animals altogether.

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. There are no benefits to keeping animals incarcerated for human amusement. No animal will voluntarily perform the physically gruelling and grossly exaggerated manoeuvres featured in a typical circus act. Without a complete ban on the use of all wild animals in travelling circuses, the animals' well-being, mental health and dignity will be completely compromised, which cannot be justified for any reason. As stated previously, there is no educational value in viewing exotic and endangered animals who have been forced to don costumes and perform unnatural tricks.

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. In addition to enduring abusive training, animals in circuses are subjected to prolonged confinement, which is inherent in travelling shows. For example, elephants with Ringling in the US spend up to 100 hours at a time chained inside poorly ventilated boxcars as the circus travels from one city to the next. The only way to resolve this conflict and thereby protect the well-being of animals is to implement a total ban on their use in circuses, as the welfare problems experienced by animals in travelling circuses are inherent in their use and cannot be corrected by any change in practice. A ban is the only solution.

Part 4: Financial Impacts of a Ban

Question 10: As far as you are aware, how often have travelling circuses that use wild animals in performances or for exhibition visited Scotland in the last 5 years and in the last 12 months?

The number in the last five years is *two*.

The number in the last 12 months is *zero*.

The frequency with which animals are abused, neglected and forced to perform in unnatural ways for human entertainment is of no consequence. Abuse should be prevented before it occurs, which can be done only by implementing a complete ban on the use of wild animals in circuses. Nonetheless, as no circus using wild animals has come to Scotland in the last 12 months – and only a small number have done so in the past five years – it is clear that the necessary ban on wild animals in circuses would actually have very little impact on

businesses operating in Scotland, although it would have a very meaningful and positive effect on animal welfare in the country.

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?

It would increase them. As has been demonstrated by the hugely popular Cirque du Soleil, a complete ban on wild animals in circuses would likely benefit circuses that use archaic animal acts, as they would have an impetus to reinvent themselves. With growing public awareness of the cruelty inherent in animal circuses, interest is declining in circuses that continue to use animals. Circuses that do not use wild animals remain profitable, indicating, at the very least, that the use of wild animals is not essential to circuses.

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?

Yes. As any modern business knows, an enterprise needs to evolve with changing public opinion. In order to comply with an existing ban in the US, the Cole Bros Circus was forced to present an animal-free version of its show and celebrated the resultant production as "just as dazzling and just as amazing" as the version that uses animals.

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?

It would have no change. Banning the use of wild animals in circuses would bring Scotland and the circus companies more in line with public sentiment, meaning that the circus industry's reputation would be improved. In addition, as mentioned in our response to Question 10, as no wild animals have been used in circuses in Scotland in the past 12 months and very few have been used in the past five years, implementing a total ban would have no negative effect on either travelling or static circuses. Instead, the ban would cement Scotland's commitment to improving and supporting animal welfare.

Question 14: What effect do you think a ban on the use and exhibition of wild animals in travelling circuses would have on the revenue of circus venues? Why?

It would increase them. A 2006 study in Massachusetts by Harvard-educated economist Jennifer Fearing found that where travelling circuses are not an available entertainment option – which need not be the case here, as many circuses are successful without wild animals – there is, if anything, a *positive* impact on the economy because consumers spend the same amount on entertainment, regardless of their options. As of the publication of Fearing's study, 28 municipalities in Massachusetts had enacted bans on the use of exotic animals in circuses, and *none* of those municipalities reported any economic losses as a result.

Part 5: Wider Television and Film Industry

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?

It would have a positive impact on all. No industry which profits from severely compromising the welfare of wild animals can be justified ethically, and any potential negative effects on such industries must be considered in that context. Any similar industry will be sent a strong message that the public and government will no longer tolerate the abuse

of wild animals and that the public considers the physical, psychological and social needs of captive wildlife a priority.

Question 16: Do you agree that the use of wild animals for performance in travelling circuses should be banned in Scotland? Why?

Yes. Wild animals in circuses, whether for the purpose of performance or exhibition, endure poor care, chronic health problems and abusive treatment. They also experience psychological disorders and aberrant behaviour, including aggression, and die prematurely. Many countries – including Austria, Bolivia, Finland, India and Singapore – have now recognised that travelling circuses are unable to address the welfare needs of wild animals adequately and have implemented bans or prohibitions on the use of wild-animal acts, and Sweden prohibits the use of bears, big cats, monkeys, hippos, giraffes and rhinos in circus acts.

Question 17: Do you agree that the use of wild animals for exhibition in travelling circuses should be banned in Scotland? Why?

Yes. Please see the comments to Question 16.

Question 18: Do you consider that any ban should be a blanket ban on all wild animals in travelling circuses? Why?

Yes. The use of wild animals in circuses must be banned because the welfare problems that the animals experience are inherent in their use and cannot be corrected by any change in practice. Extreme confinement and physical stress during transport – in combination with the use of psychologically and possibly physically abusive training methods – inevitably compromise the welfare of the animals. Similarly, a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses should apply to all species. Circuses cannot adequately provide for the unique physical, social and psychological needs of any wild animals.

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. Circuses cannot adequately provide for the unique physical, social and psychological needs of any wild animal. Many countries – including Austria, Bolivia, Finland, India and Singapore – have now recognised this fact and have implemented bans or prohibitions on the use of wild-animal acts, and England will follow suit in 2015.

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?

No. All species of animals experience pain, terror, neglect and abuse. Only a blanket ban on the use of wild animals in circuses can prevent such exploitation from taking place.

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. Please see my response to Question 20. A complete ban on wild animals in circuses is the only way to prevent abuse.

Question 22: Do you consider that the consultation paper explained the key issues sufficiently for you to properly consider your responses?

[Answer as you wish.]

Question 23: Do you consider that you had sufficient time to respond to the consultation?

[Answer as you wish.]

Question 24: Do you have any other comments on the way this consultation has been conducted?

[Answer as you wish.]

Thank you for completing the consultation. Your time is greatly appreciated and has played a meaningful part in the lives of animals used in circuses. For more information, please head to PETA.org.uk.