

Ring of Cruelty II:

The use of animals in Irish circuses in 2012



CAPS

Captive Animals' Protection Society

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Ring of Cruelty II:

The use of animals in Ireland in 2012

In 2006, the Captive Animals' Protection Society conducted a study of the use of animals in circuses across the whole of Ireland.

In order to understand the current situation, and provide a comparison to that in 2006, a further study was commissioned in 2012. The two reports comprise the most comprehensive work carried out to date on animal circuses in Ireland.

This summary report highlights the main findings of the 2012 report, *The Use of Animals in Circuses in Ireland: A 2012 Study*¹, and provides discussion for ways forward towards an end to the use of animals in circuses in Ireland.

Tiger at Tom
Duffy's Circus



Ethical Policy:

The Captive Animals' Protection Society tries to be as ethical as possible. We will not knowingly accept money from any company or individual that we believe is involved in the abuse of humans, animals or the environment.

2006 and 2012 compared: Some steps forward, but no room for complacency

2006

- There were seven circuses using animals in Ireland.
- These circuses held a total of 102 animals: 33 individuals of wild animal species, 69 individuals of domestic animal species.
- The touring season lasts up to ten consecutive months, during which time the circus might have travelled the whole of Ireland (Republic and North), sometimes performing at two venues in the space of a week.
- Many animals were suffering physical and behavioural welfare problems, living restricted lives, with temporary and inadequate accommodation, constant transportation and unnatural social groups.
- Few attempts were made by the circuses to provide suitable environmental enrichment for the animals.
- There were many health and safety risks to the public and circus staff by the use of animals as well as reported cases of serious injuries.

2012: Steps forward

- There are now only four circuses using animals in Ireland.
- Overall numbers of animals has decreased to 58: 16 wild animals and 42 domestic animals.
- Importation of animals for circuses has reduced since 2006.
- Funding from Government agency, Arts Council Ireland, for animal circuses has been reduced from €247,000 in 2006 to €103,000 in 2012/2013.

2012: More of the same

- Touring season, animals living restricted lives, temporary and inadequate accommodation, constant transportation and unnatural social groups remain serious concerns, as does lack of enrichment.
- Health and safety risk to the public has been proven by various dangerous, and potentially dangerous, incidents.
- Veterinary comment suggests that health and welfare risks for animals remain high, though little detailed assessment was carried out of individual animals.

It is clear that the ongoing campaign to see an end to the use of animals in circuses in Ireland is having an impact, but there is still some way to go to ensure that animal suffering in Irish circuses is ended once and for all.

Animal importation and use: Numbers decreasing as public concern grows

Importation of animals for use in Irish circuses has fluctuated year-on-year since 2006. Elephants and penguins are the species most imported for use in circuses in spite of the fact that it is recognised that elephants are one of the animals least suited to life in captivity of any form.

The drop in number of animals, from 102 to 58, and the reduction of the overall number of circuses, from seven to four, is a positive step in the right direction and can be attributed to a number of factors. A number of organisations based in Ireland have campaigned against animal circuses for many years, and CAPS conducted an investigation in the country in 2003 which resulted in media coverage. However, it was not until 2006 with CAPS' publication of the first in-depth study of the situation that pressure really increased and the call for an end to using animals was widely taken to the media, public and politicians.

This heightened public and political awareness has also been given impetus by international campaigns in other countries, including in the UK, leading to the banning of the use of some or all animals in circuses by law. These countries include Austria, Bolivia and Croatia. The UK government began work on a draft bill to ban the use of wild animals in circuses in England in 2012.

Despite successes so far with the campaign, it is extremely difficult to predict what the circus industry will do from one year to the next and so it would not be out of the question to see more animals being introduced in the future if legislation is not enacted to prohibit it.

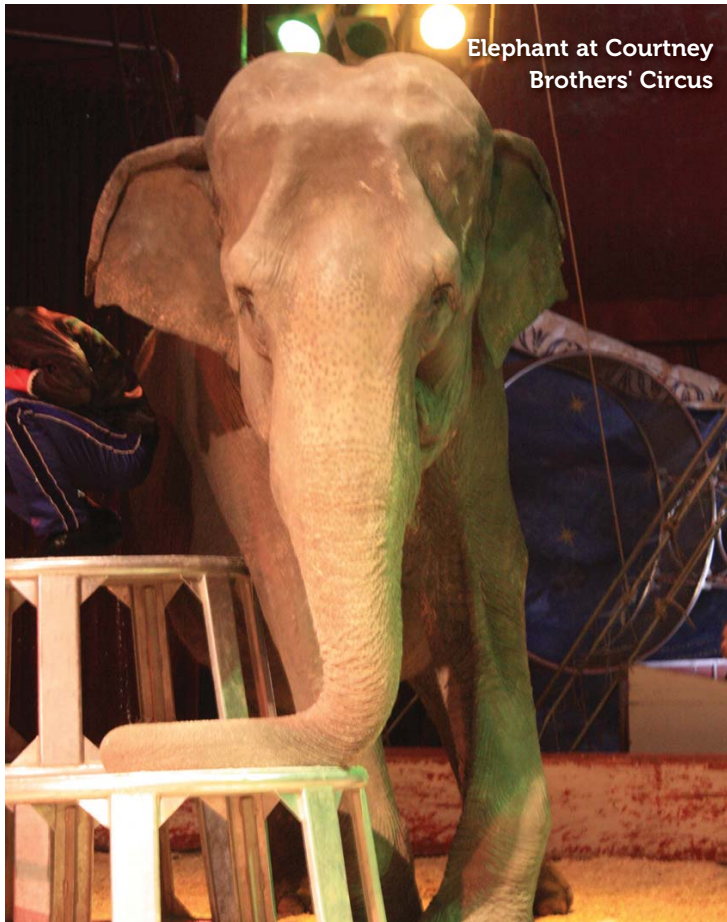
Constant transportation and temporary accommodation: No life for animals

Touring usually begins in January or February and continues until November, with some circuses also holding Christmas or winter shows. Analysis of travel for three of the circuses in the study between January to July 2012 showed that they stay on one site for an average of three days before packing up and moving on again.

Circuses normally perform one show on their first day at a venue and two on remaining days. In addition, the circuses usually do not have a day off, meaning that animals are transported to a new venue, perform that evening, do two shows the next day, move to the new venue and perform again. This pattern is repeated day after day, for the majority of the year.

Travelling circuses not only move site every few days, they travel across the whole of the country. For example, Duffy's Circus tours for nine and half months of the year, visits 32 counties in the Republic and Northern Ireland and gives approximately 500 performances over a total of 266 days.

Such regular movement means that animals are confined to transportation vehicles for longer periods and are unable to become accustomed to new sites before they are again moved on.



The Animal Acts: A lifetime of captivity for a few moments in the ring

Courtney Brothers Circus

Animals:

5 elephants, 4 Shetland ponies, 2 Bactrian camels, 1 alpaca and 1 reptile (possibly a monitor lizard).

Pony Act:

Ponies jumped over barriers, put front legs on ringside barrier, performed front leg bow and reared/walked on hind legs.

Camel, Alpaca and Monitor Act:

Walked into the ring, stood and walked out. The monitor lizard was carried around the ring by a member of staff.

Elephant Act:

One elephant walked around ring with boy sitting on her and another hanging from her trunk. Later, all five elephants were used and tricks included: standing and sitting on podiums; rearing up and putting front legs on rear of one in front; walking out of the ring by rearing and walking with front legs on rear of elephant in front.

CAPS' Veterinary Advisor Samantha Lindley BVSc MRCVS comments on elephant act:

In the first performance a child is hanging from, and then actively swinging on, the elephant's trunk. This powerful yet sensitive piece of muscle is vulnerable to damage and in particular 'trunk paralysis'. This act is particularly irresponsible. It is also dangerous for the child as he is vulnerable to being thrown [by her].

The video footage of the second act [see above for details], using all five elephants, shows actions that can place repeated strain on the joints and muscles of these animals. If one takes into account rehearsal and performance these are significant levels of abnormal exercise that these elephants are required to perform and are likely in my opinion to have an impact on their long-term health, in particular musculoskeletal pain.

The apparent 'lead' elephant then does two things that appear to be pertinent:

Firstly, she weaves (none of the others do this so I do not think it is part of the performance) before backing up to sit down. This is a displacement activity and the most likely reason for it occurring here is that she does not want to perform the manoeuvre. She then sits much more slowly than do the other elephants.

Then, when this 'trick' is repeated, she again weaves, but more persistently and she is much more reluctant to back up and sit down, so much so that the older trainer has to come round to encourage her, which takes some time. One of the possibilities is that she finds this movement painful or difficult.

As usual with such circus acts, any resemblance to the performance behaviours being 'only part of what the animals would do in the wild' is non-existent. These postures (sitting on their hindquarters and balancing on the stools) are unnatural and likely to put strain on muscles and joints, leading to pain and disability. Captive elephants are prone to the development of arthritis and this kind of repetitive behaviour will exacerbate joint wear and tear.

Tom Duffy's Circus

Animals:

2 lions, 3 tigers², 1 zebra, 3 llamas, 4 alpacas, 7 dogs, 1 snake, 15 horses and ponies.

Lion and Tiger Act:

Lions and tigers performed tricks including jumps, standing on hind legs and rollovers.

Llama, Alpaca and Zebra Act:

Two llamas, an alpaca and a zebra were used in a routine including jumps and standing on ringside fence.

Horse and Pony Act:

The horses and ponies were used in standard acts including 'Big and Little', jumps and hind leg walking. A bareback riding act had three performers jumping on and off the horse.

Dog Act:

Seven dogs performed acts such as hind leg walking and going down a slide.

Snake petting:

During the interval children could have their photo taken holding a snake.

Fossett's Circus

Animals:

1 horse, 2 ponies and 1 dog.

Horse and Pony Act:

'Big and Little' horse and Shetland pony act was presented.

Pony and Dog Act:

The dog stood on the pony's back and the pony walked around the ring.

Pony rides:

The second pony was used for rides during the interval.

Circus Gerbola

Animals:

1 Bactrian camel, 2 Shetland ponies and 1 horse.

Camel and Pony Act:

1 camel and 2 Shetland ponies were walked into the ring. They stood in the ring and then were walked out again. The camel had to be coaxed using food.

Horse Act:

The horses performed a 'Liberty' routine including walking around the ring and putting front legs on the ringside barrier. One horse appeared reluctant to perform and a section of the act was abandoned.

Pony Act:

2 Shetland ponies performed a routine including putting their front legs on the ringside barrier.

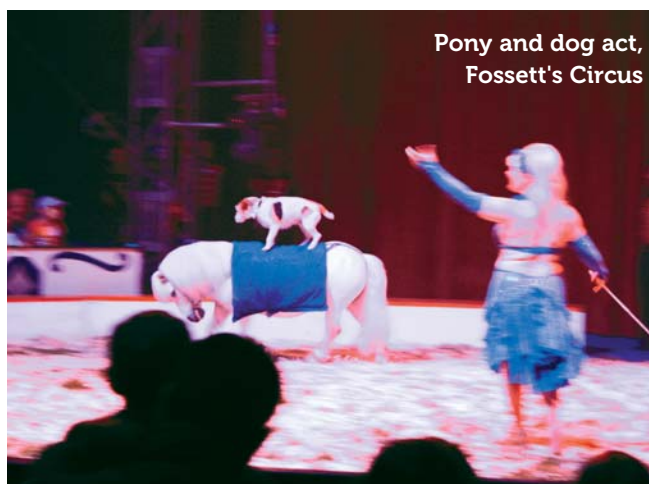
It has to be questioned whether any of the acts described above can be considered entertaining in any way. This lack of entertainment value combined with serious ethical and welfare concerns presents a clear argument that keeping animals captive for their lifetime in order to perform in these shows simply cannot be justified.

20 minutes in the ring, but what about the other 23 hours and 40 minutes of the day?

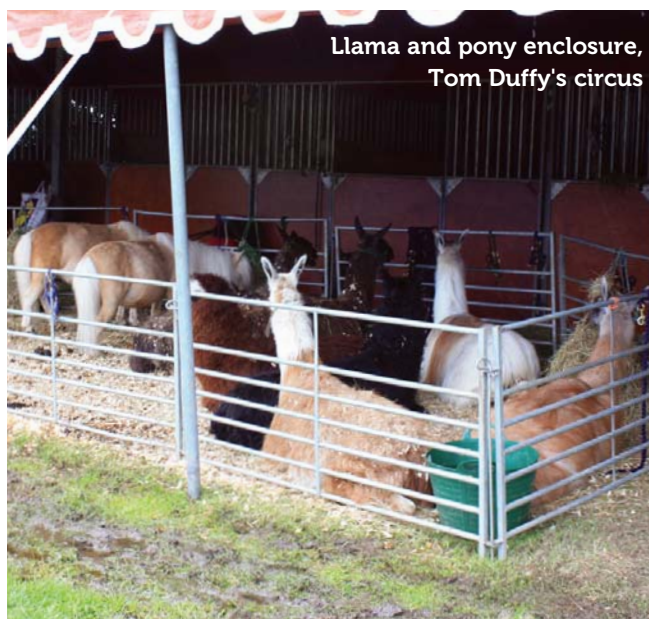
The lengthiest animal act seen lasted just 9 minutes and 28 seconds and the shortest a mere 45 seconds. Overall, the 58 animals in the four circuses were in the ring for a combined total of 1 hour and 2 minutes during the total combined show time of 5 hours and 55 minutes. Animal acts made up just 17.6% of the overall acts and the vast majority of those are all-human.

The point of including animals in these shows has to be questioned when they make up such a minor part of them, particularly when they create such high concern for animal welfare and ethics. Replacing the few animal acts seen with high quality human performances would not only eliminate concerns raised for the animals but would also enhance the shows and encourage people that avoid circuses with animals to visit.

Spending so little time in the circus ring means that the animals spend most of their time (other than any training and rehearsal sessions) in their living or daytime enclosures. Being confined to the enclosures seen during this study cannot realistically be considered to be beneficial to the psychological or physical welfare of the animals.



Pony and dog act,
Fossett's Circus



Llama and pony enclosure,
Tom Duffy's circus



Elephant act, Courtney Brothers' Circus

Focus on:

Elephants in Courtney Brothers' Circus

Taken from the wild for a long lifetime of captivity

Elephants are considered to be a species particularly unsuited to life in captivity, especially circuses, where experts agree that their complex needs simply cannot be met.

Despite the widely publicised and serious concerns for the welfare of elephants in circuses, in 2012, the Courtney Brothers' Circus toured Ireland with five Asian elephants: Baby (or Bebe), Pyra, Dana, Belinda and Sabine, all of whom are owned by Joy Gärtner³.

According to the most comprehensive database of elephants in captivity, all five of the elephants touring with Courtney's were originally taken from their natural home in the wild.

Foot and mouth disease risk as circus trainer bypasses European Commission to import elephants

Transporting five elephants to Ireland is no mean feat and, if carried out to the letter of the law, circuses must follow strict transport regulations to ensure that animals being moved from country to country do not bring with them dangerous diseases or infections. In January 2011 news came to light that four of the elephants who would be later used by Courtney's were 'stranded' in Morocco as a result of animal health legislation.

Having spent more than six months in Morocco, "under European rules they have technically acquired the 'nationality' of the country where they are," an EU spokesperson told news agency AFP. The agency reported: "Morocco, however, has no regulations on animal health compatible with EU rules and suffers moreover from foot and mouth disease (FMD)." As such, the elephants were not able to re-enter the EU directly.

After remaining in Morocco for more than a year, and despite Gärtner having been given clear advice on the correct way in which to return to the EU with the elephants, the French Ministry of Agriculture apparently stepped in and allowed the elephants to enter France in August 2011. By November, the elephants were back in the circus ring in Paris before being moved to Ireland in January 2012.

However, in April 2012, the European Commission's Spokesperson on Health & Consumer Policy told CAPS: "The Commission is not aware of the elephants having come back to EU soil. The Commission's position on this issue had always remained the same: a ban on imports of live animals from Morocco since Foot and Mouth disease is endemic in Morocco. Morocco is considered endemic of FMD and allowing such imports could put the farming community at risk".

He added: "The Commission was indeed not informed by the French authorities that the elephants had been imported to France".

The French Ministers of Agriculture and Environment have both failed to respond to repeated correspondence from CAPS questioning their involvement in the importation of the elephants from Morocco, which appears to be in direct contravention of EU regulations put in place to protect animals from disease.

Baby escapes

On 27 March 2012 one of the Courtney Brothers Circus elephants, Baby, escaped from the circus, ran down a road and into a shopping centre car park in Blackpool, County Cork. Video footage taken by an office worker on his mobile phone from an overlooking building was used in media worldwide and viewed 140,000 times on YouTube within days. The story made international news and led to renewed calls to retire the elephants; not only in order to protect the welfare of the animals themselves but because failing to adequately confine an elephant (a species defined under UK law as a 'dangerous wild animal') should be seen as a failure to protect circus staff and the public.

The video footage clearly shows the elephant behaving in a panicked manner as she is grabbed by a circus worker who tries to gain control of her. One minute into the filming, another worker arrives and tries to assist but Baby panics further, starts to run and the two men move quickly away from her. Then, as she runs towards the car park exit and onto the road, the first worker begins jabbing her sharply with an ankus, also known as a bullhook, a metal rod with a sharp point used to 'control' elephants. Baby continues to run along the road, under the office window. The footage reveals the person filming running to another window to continue filming as the elephant, followed closely by the two men – one continuing to jab with the ankus – runs towards a main road. The video ends as the elephant disappears from view.



Reuters

Simon Adams, a Zoo & Wildlife Veterinary Adviser, has experience with elephants in captive situations. He offered his thoughts on the video footage of Baby's escape:

"It is not possible to say with certainty what stimuli were motivating this elephant from the video clip, however she was clearly 'distressed' by many strange stimuli, such as unfamiliar territory, the general alarm of the people around her, noises and shouting etc, all adding to her confusion and alarm. However, it does seem to me that the presence of the keeper with the ankus [bullhook] caused her to decide to flee from the scene at the sight of the noxious pain inflicting stimulus that even the sight of the ankus produced".

CAPS had previously warned of the dangers of using elephants in circuses following publication of the 2006 study. That report questioned the adequacy of the electric fence containing the two elephants then at the Royal Russian Circus (the name previously used by Courtney's). The report warned that "there is always a risk of a dangerous incident occurring".

Circus visitor crushed by "drugged" elephant

Four days after Baby's dramatic escape from the circus, a 31-year-old Spanish man, Justino Muños, was seriously injured whilst feeding the elephants. Muños, a friend of one of the circus workers, was rushed to Cork University Hospital with several broken ribs and a punctured lung after an elephant fell over and crushed him on a concrete floor. His injuries were so severe that doctors had to put him in an induced coma.

Following the incident, the circus had blood and urine samples from the elephants tested; claiming they feared the animals' food had been tampered with. Tests found traces of paracetamol and morphine (likely to be metabolised codeine) in the samples taken from the elephant who escaped in March and the one who crushed the worker.

The circus implied that the elephants had been drugged by a third party and used the results to explain away Baby's escape and the injury to Muños. However, in a sign that the veterinary lab was perhaps not in agreement with the way that the results were used publicly by the circus, laboratory director, Lucy Gaffney, said it was 'highly unlikely' the presence of these drugs would have caused the elephants to behave in the unusual way they had.

Serious concerns were raised again by CAPS and other groups with regard to both the risk to the animals following the drugging, as well as the clear danger to visitors to the circus. Despite repeated calls to retire the elephants, it does not appear that any formal action has been taken against the circus as a result of either the drugging or the hospitalisation of Muños, who later recovered from his injuries.

Parading elephants continues despite clear safety risks

CAPS first raised concerns about the public safety risks of parading elephants through public streets in its report on Irish circuses in 2006. Despite this, Courtney's has persisted in using its five elephants in public parades throughout 2012. Even the serious incidents involving the circus' elephants outlined above did not stop the circus continuing with such publicity stunts. Press images show members of the public close to, or touching, the elephants with no barriers between them.

Time for change

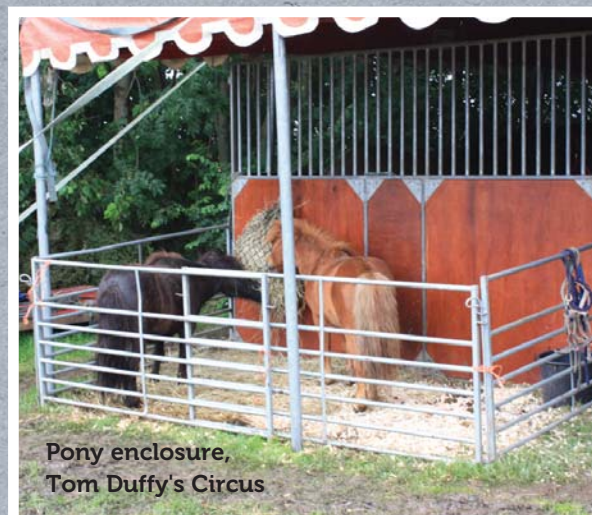
In 2006, CAPS warned that keeping elephants in circuses was not only unethical and contrary to the individuals' most basic health and welfare needs, but that it was simply an accident waiting to happen. In the last year alone, the series of events involving the elephants in Courtney Brothers' Circus have demonstrated that it is no longer a case of waiting for that accident to happen, but it is clearly time to ensure that both elephants and people are protected once and for all.

CAPS maintains that, just as the last elephant in a circus in the UK, Anne, was retired in 2011 to the delight of members of the public around the world, Courtney's must follow suit and commit to ending their use of elephants in future circus seasons in Ireland.

Visit www.irishcircuses.org/a-problem-of-elephantine-proportions or scan here:



Accommodation for animals: A picture speaks a thousand words



Protection under the law: The potential is there but Governments need to act

Republic of Ireland

Since 2008, CAPS has been involved in the consultation process of the Animal Health and Welfare Bill, which seeks to modernise animal welfare legislation, as has happened in England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland throughout the same period. However, despite detailed submissions and meetings with officials at the Department of Agriculture, the Irish government has no plans to introduce a ban on the use of animals in circuses.

The Bill remains in draft stage and currently provides little improvement, certainly for animals in circuses. The 2012 draft of the Bill does, however, grant powers to make additional regulations to protect animal welfare. Whilst limited, this could provide some scope for the government to recognise the evidence relating to animal use in circuses as supporting a prohibition on the practice.

Northern Ireland

CAPS' involvement in progressing animal welfare legislation in Northern Ireland began in 2006 following the publication of the first study into Irish circuses. The charity has been involved with each stage of the consultation process of legislative change, including written submissions and meetings.

In July 2011, the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 was introduced, replacing the 1972 Act of the same name. Along the lines of the Animal Welfare Act 2006 (covering England and Wales) and the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, this introduces a 'duty of care' on anyone responsible for a vertebrate animal.

The subject of animal circuses has been far more of a political issue in Northern Ireland than in the Republic, with several Assembly Members raising debates, submitting questions to Ministers and opposing animal use in statements to the media.

Disappointingly, the current Minister of Agriculture, Michelle O'Neill, has stated that no ban is forthcoming, despite the presentation of evidence from a wide range of stakeholders to support prohibitive measures.

Focus on:

Arts Council Ireland funding of animal circuses

Of the four circuses that continue to use animals in Ireland, three of them have received ongoing funding from the Arts Council Ireland (ACI). The ACI is a Government agency whose main source of funding is the Irish Exchequer. Put simply, this means that Irish taxpayers' money is being used year-on-year to support the continued use of animals, including tigers, lions, alligators and seals, in circuses.

In total, almost €1,000,000 has been granted to circuses that use animals since 2006, which represents over 50% of Arts Council funding for circuses (all-human and animal) overall.

Chart 16: ACI funding of animal and non-animal circuses, 2006 and 2012/2013 (Euros)

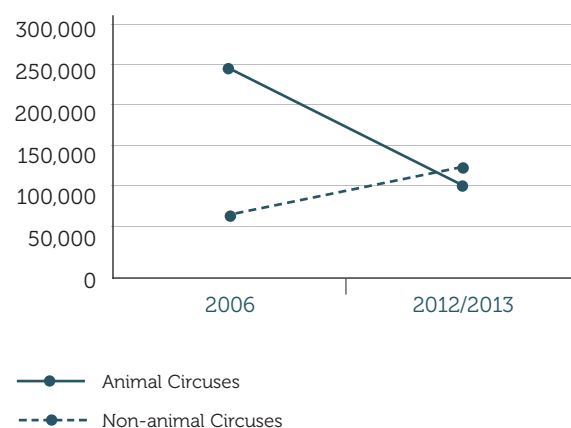




Table 1: Funding for animal versus non-animal circuses, 2006 – 2012/2013

Circus type	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012/ 2013	Total funding 2006-2012/2013
Animal Circus	€247,000	€197,474	€123,000	€123,000	€84,700	€101,870	€103,000	€980,044
Non-animal Circus	€70,000	€120,000	€146,000	€143,000	€151,900	€218,815	€126,000	€975,715
Funding difference	+ €177,000	+ €77,474	- €23,000	- €20,000	- €67,200	- €116,945	- €23,000	+ €4,329

+ indicates that animal circuses received more funding than non-animal shows for that year.

- indicates that non-animal circuses received more funding than animal shows for that year.

Welfare groups' opposition ignored as ACI invites circus industry to write its own rules

In September 2007, the ACI decided to "establish a policy framework for animal welfare". Whether this was in response to CAPS' 2006 study, the charity's criticism of the funding by the ACI or protests by CAPS' campaign partners, the Alliance for Animal Rights, outside the ACI's offices in March 2007 is not known.

In 2009, the 'Framework for the Welfare of Animals Presented in the Arts' was published, setting out standards that must be met in order to be eligible for ACI funding. The scope of the document covers not only circuses but other productions involving animals.

Conditions to be met under the Framework include:

- Maintenance of an Animal Welfare Policy and Animal Care Routines
- Compliance with Animal Health, Welfare and Conservation Laws
- Registration with National Authorities and Documentation
- Proof of Veterinary Coverage
- Successful Completion of Veterinary Inspection

The Framework document was guided by a Working Party including officials from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In addition, three individuals are listed as having "reviewed the Framework in draft form and improved it with their ideas, observations and input":

Dr Thomas Althaus, who is associated with the Swiss Circus Knie, in particular explaining to audiences how animals are trained at different venues the circus performs at.

Dr Jim Collins, who appears to have no specialist involvement with animal use in circus performances but he is well known within the exotic pet trade and his work has involved actively promoting and defending the private keeping of wild animals.

Dr Christine Lendl, who is listed on the website of Germany's Circus Krone as a member of their veterinary staff. Krone describes itself as 'Europe's largest circus' and includes elephants, lions and tigers in its shows.

In addition, Laura van der Meer was contracted by the ACI in 2007 as a consultant. She was invited to submit a proposal for the ACI's animal policy and to "form and lead a working group" on the matter. Ms van der Meer is the Brussels Representative of the European Circus Association and Executive Director of the Fédération Mondiale du Cirque; both are organisations that actively lobby across Europe against restrictions on using animals in circuses.



CAPS questioned the fact the consultees used throughout the development process appeared to have a very heavily weighted interest in perpetuating the use of animals in circuses and asked if any other individuals or groups had been approached to offer their input.

The ACI's Head of Theatre and Circus told CAPS in July 2012: "Both the ISPCA and DSPCA [Dublin SPCA] were offered sight of, and an opportunity to comment on, a draft version of the document. They met with Arts Council members, and while they accepted the offer to review the document in good faith, their total opposition to the use of wild animals in circuses remained absolute, which position was noted by the Council."

Animal welfare policies written by circuses, for circuses, deemed acceptable by ACI

In CAPS' 2006 report, it was noted that the ACI had refused to provide copies of the individual circus' 'policies on animal welfare' which circuses were required to submit when applying for funding even prior to the introduction of the framework. CAPS did subsequently obtain those policies and were disturbed to note that all three circuses had simply submitted a copy of the animal welfare standards produced by the Association of Circus Proprietors (ACP) in 2006. These industry-produced standards were widely criticised at the time of publication as purely an attempting to justify using animals in performances whilst failing to provide serious standards of care. Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act for subsequent grant applications by Tom Duffy's and Gerbola's showed that the same document had been submitted as their policy.

In 2009, Circus Gerbola included two fur seals in its show. Documentation provided refers to the 2009 show being "themed around water" and called 'Aqua'. Despite providing an overview of the plan for the show, there is no mention of the use of fur seals or any other animals. Neither are they specifically mentioned in the animal welfare policy for the circus which was provided by ACI.

ACI official confirms that staff are not qualified to assess animal welfare

During June and July 2012, CAPS discussed concerns about the animal welfare framework with David Parnell, the ACI's Head of Theatre and Circus. Although Mr Parnell was open in answering the queries put to him, it is clear that the ACI believes the standard documents provided by circuses are acceptable.

With regard to the role of the ACI in judging whether funding animal circuses is appropriate, Mr Parnell said of the framework:

"[The document] takes as its starting point the fact that such acts are permissible under European and Irish law. As you know, the Arts Council is not responsible for the legislation, and so decided the best course of action was to introduce minimum standards of welfare for animals used in live performance (not just circus)."

In relation to animal welfare policies to be submitted by circuses requesting funding, Mr Parnell commented:

"The documentation received from funded circuses contains information relating to the welfare and care of the animals that each tours with. It may also include information about animals that the circuses could propose to tour with at a later date. It is understood that the governing body that a number of the organisations are members of issue guidance to their members (as would also be the case with membership organisations from other art forms.) The circuses can opt to present these guidelines or create their own as long as the paperwork presented includes the species that they are presently touring with."

However, the ACI "does not have on staff specialists who assess whether the overall individual welfare policies meet the required standard". In other words, circuses can provide policies, but no-one at the ACI is qualified to assess whether those policies meet animal welfare needs. It has to be questioned, therefore, what purpose the policies serve and what impact the

ACI's animal welfare framework can possibly have for the animals involved.

Mr Parnell stated that circuses receiving funding must provide the relevant animal welfare documentation countersigned by qualified veterinary staff. These documents have not been seen by CAPS and were not included in the documentation provided under the Freedom of Information Act, so we are unable to verify whether they ensure the ACI's Framework – one that appears based on self-regulation provided by industry-written guidelines – is met.

The Arts Council Ireland: A policy for the future?

CAPS has always recognised that circuses are an important part of the entertainment industry and, in Ireland, provide shows in many areas of the country where choices for live entertainment are limited, such as rural locations. CAPS' opposition is not to circuses, just to the use of animals.

We appreciate that the role of the Arts Council Ireland is to support a broad spectrum of artistic work across the country. However, it needs to recognise the large, and increasing, opposition to the use of animals in circuses and to reflect public opinion on this – particularly when public monies are being utilised. To offer the fact that the use of animals in circuses is not illegal as the justification for continued funding makes little sense as arts funding, by its very nature, is subjective and based on the individual artistic merit of the project. Put simply, just because a practice is legal does not infer that that practice has any artistic merit.

Tigers jumping through hoops, lions living in lorries and a dog standing on a pony's back as she walks around a sawdust ring is not considered art by a growing number of members of the public and national governments alike. Furthermore, the increasing belief that the practice of using animals in circuses is both unethical and inherently cruel begs the question to those that maintain that the practice has some artistic value: Art, at what cost? People are said to have to suffer for their art. We maintain that animals should not.

The ACI openly admits that it has no staff qualified to ensure that the policies that it approves are capable of meeting animal welfare needs. As such, it is reasonable to suggest that, given the widespread agreement that animal welfare can be seriously compromised in the travelling circus environment, the ACI should limit its financial backing to those circuses that do not use any animals. Furthermore, the ACI policy should adapt to encourage circuses currently using animals to replace them with high quality human performances. The ACI cannot continue to hide behind the smokescreen of an animal welfare policy which this reports suggests plays no serious role in protecting animals.

Visit www.irishcircuses.org/animals-who-suffer-for-our-art or scan here for full version of this article:



Conclusion

Although this study reveals an improved situation since 2006, there is no room for complacency.

Animal welfare legislation throughout Ireland is still inadequate. In Northern Ireland, the Agriculture Minister stated earlier this year that she has "no plans to introduce a ban on animals in circuses", while in the Republic the Animal Health and Welfare Bill (which also fails to provide for a ban on animal acts) is still yet to finish its parliamentary process and become law.

Despite slow progress in achieving a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses in England (where all major parties support a ban and at the time of writing this report the coalition government is drafting primary legislation to introduce one), it is widely accepted that this practice has no future in the country and it is hoped that Scotland and Wales will follow this lead. Politically, Northern Ireland seems set on waiting for the Republic to take action as all circuses touring in the North have their bases in the South. Stormont can, and should, take its own affirmative action without waiting for the Oireachtas, particularly as it has already made much speedier progress in updating general animal welfare legislation.

In the same way that Belfast hides behind Dublin in its refusal to take action, so the Arts Council Ireland hides behind its animal welfare framework to continue to fund circuses that have, during its period of funding, used tigers, lions, horses, dogs, fur seals and other animals in performances. This report aims to reveal the ACI's animal welfare framework as just another industry-led attempt to justify animal use. CAPS believes that the ACI, as a government agency, should instead only fund all-human shows and work with circuses currently using animals to adapt and showcase only non-animal acts.

Less than one quarter of all acts in the four circuses in 2012 use animals. How easy it would be, then, to replace animal acts, which play a minor part in the show but have serious consequences for animal welfare and ethics, with an all-human show.

While changing public attitude in Ireland will eventually lead to circuses removing animal acts, this change will not come quickly enough for those animals. A change in Arts Council Ireland policy to funding only all-human shows would aid this process but it is for central government, both in the Republic and North, to recognise, as other countries have, that using animals in circuses is unethical and fails animal welfare and to introduce legislation to prohibit the practice.

Yes! I'd like to support CAPS!

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References

- ¹ The full study report, *The Use of Animals in Circuses in Ireland: A 2012 Study*, Redmond, C., 2012, UK, can be downloaded from www.captiveanimals.org or www.irishcircuses.org
- ² Two tigers seen in the outside enclosure after the show appeared younger in age than the three tigers in the show. No other tigers could be seen. As it is unclear whether there were actually five tigers this report refers instead to three tigers being held/used at the circus.)
- ³ During 2011, Gärtner's elephants had been performing with Cirque Pinder in Paris and a circus history website gave the names of the elephants at this show as Baby, Pira, Dana, Belinda and Thai. CAPS believes that the elephant in Ireland referred to as 'Sabine' may in fact be 'Thai' as no elephant by the name Sabine appears on the database of the Elephant Encyclopaedia website (www.elephant.se), the most comprehensive database of elephants in captivity.

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