Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from Circus Mondao

Please accept this response to the CALL FOR EVIDENCE, by the environment, climate change and land reform committee of the Scottish Parliament in respect of WILD ANIMALS IN TRAVELLING CIRCUSES.

1. WHAT IS A WILD ANIMAL? IT DOES NOT STATE CLEARLY WHAT IS DEFINED AS A WILD ANIMAL, or is this just left open to people own interpretation?

During the consultation where people made aware that all circus animals in the UK came from captive breed stock and none where taken from the wild, (I think no animals have been taken from the wild for over 35 years and definitely none of ours have).

AN ANIMAL THAT IS NOT COMMONLY DOMESTICATED IN THE Great Britain. to include animals who collective behaviour, life cycle and physiology remains unaltered from their wild type despite their breeding and living conditions under human control for multiple generations.

It's mentioned a few times that a wild animal is HARD WIRED to their natural instincts and that it's not ethical for them to live in captivity, The same could be said for the domestic dog, How many times have we read in the newspapers about dogs savaging people? This is their natural instincts coming through even after thousands of years of domestication they can turn wild at the click of your fingers, domesticated dogs who have gone feral for whatever reason will revert to their natural instincts to survive, by working in a pack and hunting for food.

The wildest animal at our circus is our cockerel who certainly have all his wild instincts, our camels, reindeers and zebras are / were all very quiet and not like their wild cousins as they had all been born and raised in captivity and had a close relationship with humans.

So what does this ban include? reindeer, camels, parrots, Buffalo, birds of prey, raccons, skunks, ostrich the list goes on. It is not clear.

If reindeer are classed as a wild animal surely it would be prejudice just to class it as wild because its a circus person who owns it, are the cairngorm reindeer classed as wild animals also? Or because they are not owned by a circus person they are classed as domesticated? these animals are used for entertainment, maybe not in a circus ring, but they are used for pulling sleighs and being on displays and for people to meet and learn more about them,

The same could be said about birds of prey displays, these can be WILD ANIMALS that have either been born into captivity or acquired some other way, They do not live in huge aviaries where they can free fly and act out there natural instincts, They are often tied to a small stand at ground level and are trained to fly from one handler to the other for a piece of meat. I’m sure they are well cared for and have all their
needs met but ethical?? And the displays that they do are for entertainment as well as educational.

Camels= Camels are used in the UK for trekking and giving rides. These animals can be loaded into trucks each week travelled up and down the country to unfamiliar surroundings (different shows like, county shows, or additional race day entertainment, private functions) sometimes great distances can be travelled, but a circus whose animals live in the same environment each week (their enclosures are the same with the same animals surrounding them also situated behind the big top so nothing is really different to them each week, just a new venue with fresh grass and fresh grazing). They travel short distances each week, (LAST JOURNEY WAS 20 MILES, animals loaded approx 16.30pm and all animals unloaded by approx 19.30pm) so why are we discriminated against just because we perform under the banner of CIRCUS?

Banning wild animal in a touring circus and not other animal industries who undertake the same business model is unethical in itself.

Just because they are classed as wild does not mean they cannot have a close relationship with their handlers and have a happy, healthy and fulfilled life in the circus.

Our animals do not do anything unnatural, everything they do within the circus ring is a natural movement which has been paired with a command and reward with a treat. Our camel only gives rides to the children at present.

We have great respect for our animals they are not a just commodity within the circus they are members of our family, any circus person will tell you that, We have a very close relationship with our animals and we believe such relationships are beneficial to the animal and the human,

Ethics

Policy background 5, it states THE CIRCUS HAS BEEN THE SOURCE OF LONGSTANDING UNEASE TO MANY PEOPLE, This is mainly down to ANIMAL RIGHTS GROUPS, who over many years have been spreading lies and propaganda to further push their agenda. Due to numerous animal rights groups having a large database of supporters They are able to rally there supporters to answer this consultation in there hundreds who are already opposed to animal and human interaction, Not general working class families who are generally our supporters, [REDACTED TEXT] done a short survey which gave him overwhelming support, and we also done a survey which gave support to us too.

This had been done by publishing articles full of untruths and printing pictures completely out of context and often not even related to a circus animal, It is unethical that such an organisation are allowed to do this.

CONSULTATION= Once again the public consultation was done outside of the circus normal touring season of April to November so that the circus community could not ask their supporters to answer the consultation, this also happened with the UK CONSULTATION in 2010.
Animal rights groups are a business and it is easy for them to have staff to send out the consultation to every member in their database, also the RSPCA ARE A WELFARE GROUP AND A CHARITY AND SHOULD NOT HAVE A POLITICAL AGENDA.

A figure of 2043 respondents from 5 million people is very low and only approx 1000 where actual Scottish residents, it would be interesting to know the locations of other respondents.

There should not be a ban but Scotland should follow the regulations system of England.

It is wrong that circuses with the best intentions that uphold the right ethics and welfare of their animals are to be punished as a result of a few BAD APPLES.

Such an attitude would demonstrate little respect for the efforts the circus people and animal trainers make each day to ensure the welfare of their animals, we believe regulations should be put in place just like UK.

Licensing

We have run under the DEFRA LICENCING SYSTEM since the start of our touring season Feb 2013.

With the licensing system we have not had to change much as our animals welfare and husbandry has always been paramount. but the licensing does now see us having more inspections for our animals throughout the year.

Before the licensing system, we had inspections by local animal welfare officers from the local councils who most of the time had no idea of what they was looking at often asking what a mule was and intrigued by our wild animals camels and zebra and wanting a picture the same can be said for the RSPCA officers who would pop in. every time they came they was so impressed with our animal husbandry and welfare and would often say to us "YOU COULD TEACH A THING OR TWO TO SOME OF THE PLACES WE HAVE TO VISIT" now this is a compliment to us , but the RSPCA are opposed to CIRCUS WITH ANIMALS and their officers have also been advised not to sign into our visitors book which is required for official visitors to the circus.

Our inspections.

We must have quarterly visits by a vet to check the animals welfare and conditions and they must also scan the animals to check they are the same animals that are on the stock list, they must also produce a letter which we must forward to DEFRA.

2 of these inspections must be done by our lead vet which is one on tour and one in our winter quarters, the other 2 inspections are done by vets around the country.

3 inspections by DEFRA APPROVED INSPECTORS, 2 announced and 1 un announced visits per year, if there are any new animals od compliance issues further un announced visits can happen at the cost of the licence holder.
So that is 7 animal inspections per year (no other animal industry is inspected as much as us)

These inspectors are normally onsite with us for minimum 5 hours (we have 5 wild animals) the inspections normally start with the animals, checking their bodily conditions, their general well being, their enclosure areas, checking microchip numbers, also checking where we store the food and checking that they have 24 hour access to food and water, checking the animals harness that they wear during a performance also the transport that they travel in, most inspectors will also cast an eye over our other stock as well. Once the inspection of animals is finished we will head to the office and go through all the paperwork, this includes daily check lists, vets reports, behavioural and environment enrichment, daily welfare list etc etc, copies of all our DEFRA INSPECTION REPORTS can be found on the DEFRA website. The inspection report is a in depth and comprehensive report of what the inspector found on the day of his announced or unannounced inspection. The inspector and his accompanying officer must also watch a performance and inspect the zoo/stables area after the performance when the public are visiting the animals.

All of this is paid for by the licence holder nothing comes from the tax payer.

We have made a few adjustments to our animals husbandry due to the size regulations set down by DEFRA, but this was very minor.

Enclosure sizes 15 SQUARE METRES per animal for indoor (20 m^2 if 2 animals)

Outside area 100 square metres per animal (extra 50 per extra animal)

Most weeks our enclosure sizes exceed this.

Last week both camels inside/outside enclosure was 100 square metre each plus a further outside electric fenced area attached to their enclosure of approx 200 m^2, also the male was tethered out during day next to nice trees etc, our reindeers inside/outside enclosure was just over 150 square metres plus they also had access to the llama enclosure which was approx 80 square metres during the day.

We have taken a look at the Scottish regulations for keeping a camel under the DWA and from our understanding the regulations are a lot less than what we adhere to with the DEFRA circus animal regs. enclosure sizes much small on the Scottish website that we had looked at.

There is a lot of paperwork with the licencing system which does take up a lot of time, in our opinion there is too much paper work which is often duplicated which does not benefit the animals in any way.

We have not had to change anything with our training methods, transport, enclosure fencing, General welfare and handling or veterinary care. But we do have to document everything and in quite detail to be kept on record.

5 FREEDOMS

Freedom from hunger and thirst
Freedom from discomfort

Freedom from pain, injury and disease

Freedom to express normal behaviour

Freedom from fear and distress

We are able to meet all 5 FREEDOMS as set down by the farm animal welfare council many moons ago and used by RSPCA regularly as they say they are considered aspirational, as they cannot always be achieved and maintained at all times. Animal keepers should aim to provide the 5 freedoms to their animals as far as possible.

Our Consultation

After the UK consultation was done we decided to do our own survey with visitors to our circus. The UK consultation was done out of our normal touring season so was hard for us to speak with our supporters and ask them to do the consultation so WE printed out 10,000 basic surveys which we did plan to present to 10 DOWNING STREET in support of circus animals when the case arise,

We raised 3 questions, with yes / no answers

Do you think animals should be banned from working in the circus?

Did you enjoy seeing the animals in the circus?

Do you think they looked well looked after?

At that time of our survey we had zebras, camels and reindeer, horses, ponies, llamas and pigeons appearing in our show.

From our 10,000 respondents 8446 was positive that they wanted to see our animals still performing in the circus,

592 all ticked yes, 30 all ticked no, we guess they did not read the questions

104 dont know

104 had additional comments about some wild animals like elephants and tigers, or as long as animals are well looked after there is no problem,

Unfortunately these documents have been stored in a truck which was not mouse proof so we have lost some due to being nibbled! Each survey was signed and postcoded we can supply them on request.

CIRCUSES TOURING SCOTLAND

Our family have been animal trainers in Scotland since the 17th century.

We for many years have spoken about touring Scotland with our circus CIRCUS MONDAO we have a strong Scottish heritage and there have been over 6
generations of animal trainers in my family, we are often asked by residents of Scotland (who interact with us on Facebook) who enjoy traditional circus if we will be touring up there. We have had very long discussions about this and have spoken with the licensing team in Scotland on occasions to understand better the system that Scotland runs under. We believe that Scotland have a very robust regulatory regime for circus which takes into account human and animal welfare and believe we can comply to these regulations with ease, but as we are a very small family circus we don’t have office or secretarial staff who deal with all the paperwork etc that goes with it, it is all done by ourselves who are also dealing with the day to day care and welfare of the animals this is one reason why we have not yet visited Scotland with our show.

Also we have not been to Scotland so far as we have not found suitable venues as stepping stones to get up to Scotland as in general we only travel short distances with our animals each week (20 - 40 miles) but i know if we did come to Scotland we would be very well received by the public. Our journeys each week / fortnight or month is 1 or 2 hours, but by law we could travel our animals for 24 hours before they would need unloading out of the truck as long as they have relevant food and drink breaks. But this is not what our animals are used to so would not do it, that why we would be looking for venues on the way up to Scotland to stop at.

I am pretty sure if we come to Scotland we would have more supporters in the first month than the consultation had responders.

It states in the policy memorandum = impact assessments section 44 , THERE ARE CURRENTLY NO TRAVELLING CIRCUSES IN SCOTLAND ( bill introduced 10th may 2017) This is incorrect, in fact there is currently a circus touring Scotland and has been since 20th march 2017 first venue was Dumfries. and I’m sure CIRCUS VEGAS will arrive very soon with their show from Ireland (they have horses) and I’m sure Zippos will be up at some point and i know this show is always well received. Also have a variety of performing animals.

Kind Regards

Miss Carol Macmanus

Circus Mondao