

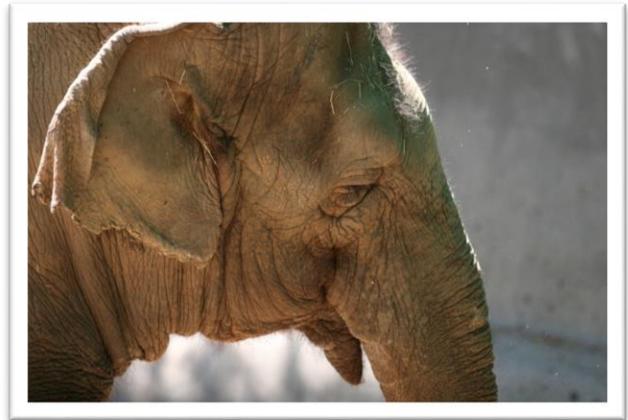


# Circus Animal Abuse

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Animal rights groups have been trying for years to stop circuses from using endangered wild animals such as lions, tigers and elephants in shows as “entertainment.” The unnatural and abusive conditions that many of these animals are forced to endure can lead to physical and psychological abuse and sometimes untimely death of the animal. Rights groups’ concerns include abusive training methods, severe confinement, a lack of adequate veterinary care and depletion of species that are already becoming extinct in the wild. None of these



animals are native to North America, and all have been relocated solely for the purpose of profit as entertainment. Most survive in unnatural and inhumane conditions until they are no longer needed or useful.

## Elephants

There are estimated to be less than 450,000 African and between 35,000 and 45,000 Asian elephants left in the wild. In the wild, elephants are free-roaming creatures. Baby elephants usually stay with their mothers for two years in the wild. Elephants are smart, social and intelligent, and communicate using complex rumbles, trumpets and gestures to display different emotions. In the circus, the babies are forcefully taken from their mothers at an early age and trained with negative reinforcement using electric prods, whips and bull hooks to learn various circus tricks. Learning to balance on small pedestals causes many elephants to have knee and foot problems. When not performing, the elephants are kept chained and unable to move. Circuses must travel from location to location all over the United States. To get to the next destination, up to five elephants may be crammed in train cars, with little room to move. Many times, the train will continue without rest stops for up to sixteen hours a day depending on where the next circus town is located.

## Tigers and Lions

Unfortunately, there are more Tigers in U.S. captivity than there are in the wild. In their natural habitat of Asia, there are estimated to be only approximately 3,200 left, whereas in captivity there may be as many as 5,000. These shrinking numbers make Tigers a RED Flag endangered species. Lions are much more threatened because their numbers have decreased even more dramatically. There are approximately 30,000 African and only 350 Asiatic lions left in the wild. Lions are social creatures and live in prides of males, females and young cubs. All of the female lions in the pride will nurse and take

care of the cubs. In the circus, cubs are removed from their mothers early to be socialized to accept human contact. Lions and tigers are kept in small cages except during performances and virtually get no exercise other than during their act. The cages are so small that the cats cannot turn around in them. When the big cats can no longer perform or do not behave, they are sold to the highest bidder. This usually includes the canned hunt business, where these circus cats are hunted and killed on private property as trophies.

In March of 2015, Ringling Bros. Circus announced that their thirteen elephants would no longer be a part of circus performances after 2018. Feld Entertainment, the parent company of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey, admitted that changing attitudes of circus-going consumers against using elephants as circus performers forced the change.

“Animals in Circuses and the Laws Governing Them,” [www.animallaw.info](http://www.animallaw.info), (2010).

**National Geographic**, “Is Captive Lion Hunting Really Helping to Save the Species?” Paul Steyn, 05/05/2015.

*Credit to Kaye Klapper*

