



## FVE position on the use of animals in travelling circuses

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The use of any animal species (including birds, reptiles, and domesticated species) in any entertainment, travelling or otherwise, should be submitted to scientific and ethological consideration.

The use of wild mammals, especially elephants, big cats (lions and tigers) in travelling circuses<sup>1</sup> reflects a traditional, but outdated, view of wild animals. These animals have the same genetic makeup as their counterparts in the wild and retain their natural instinctive behavioural drives and needs. The needs of non-domesticated, wild mammals cannot be met within a travelling circus; especially in terms of housing and being able to express normal behaviours.

There is little or no educational, conservational, research or economic benefit derived from the use of wild mammals in travelling circuses that might justify their use. In addition to the welfare considerations, the use of wild mammals in circuses can represent serious animal health and public health and safety risks<sup>23</sup>. These wild mammals can cause physical injury to the public and their keepers and zoonotic disease transmission<sup>4</sup>. Public polls<sup>5</sup> show that an overwhelming majority of the public backs a ban on wild animals performing in circuses.

Many European countries, such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Slovenia, Poland and Malta, have already prohibited the use of all (wild) animals in circuses. Other countries are currently examining a prohibition e.g. Netherlands and the UK, or have severely restricted the number of species permitted in travelling circuses, e.g. Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, Norway, Slovakia and Sweden.

**FVE**, aiming to “*promote animal health, animal welfare and public health across Europe*” therefore **recommends**: all European and national competent authorities **to prohibit the use of wild mammals in travelling circuses** across Europe since there is by no means the possibility that their physiological, mental and social requirements can adequately be met. Suitable sunset provisions, re-housing opportunities and in some cases as last resort euthanasia need to be worked out with the circus owners.

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<sup>1</sup> The FVE considers travelling circuses to be travelling companies of entertainers which move regularly to deliver performances to the public for the purposes of entertainment

<sup>2</sup> ‘Wildlife, Exotic Pets, and Emerging Zoonoses’ Bruno Chomel

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2725831/>

<sup>3</sup> “*Elephants in circuses: analysis of practice, policy and future*” by Animals and Society institute J. Bradshaw  
[http://www.kerulos.org/projects/elephant\\_ptsd\\_assets/Bradshaw\\_ASI-Elephant\\_Policy-2007.pdf](http://www.kerulos.org/projects/elephant_ptsd_assets/Bradshaw_ASI-Elephant_Policy-2007.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Escapes of elephants and tigers occur eg in Paris, France Sept 2013 a run-away circus kills a man, in Sweden May 2013 a run-away elephant rams a house and family as do deadly accidents with trainers.

<sup>5</sup> Public polls: [UK GovPol](#) 2013, Malta 2012 [MaltaOnline](#), Spain [20minutos](#) 2009, Germany Gfk 2010

**References:**

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Analysis of national legislation related to the keeping and sale of exotic pets in Europe  
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