

# Factfile



## Sad life of the circus animal

Circuses are no fun for animals; they are transported throughout their life cycle, routinely travelling for seven hours or more, often covering thousands of miles a year, regardless of age, condition or reproductive status. They live in temporary facilities for most of the year and may remain tethered for long periods of time. It has also been reported that performance is potentially one of the most stressful situations experienced by a circus animal.

While most people now accept that there is no place for wild animals in circuses, the lives of domesticated animals such as horses and dogs in circuses are also of poor quality. During performance, horses may wear tight bridles to keep their heads down towards their chests and are made to stand on their hind legs and turn round several times on the spot. They may develop arthritis and joint pain caused by the repeated performance of unnatural behaviour.

Circus animals spend very long periods in stables. Prolonged tight tethering in small pens has often been observed, covering most of the time that they are not performing or rehearsing. Horses and ponies are gregarious social animals, but after being unloaded from their boxes or transporters they are often confined in tents, separated from their companions by stalls, which do not allow for socialising or mutual grooming. Dogs are often underweight and dirty, they can spend most of the day in cages where they show stereotypical behaviour; pacing up and down and walking in constant circles.

Many local authorities in the UK have already made the decision not to let their land to circuses with wild animals and a number will not accept domesticated animals either, but some private landowners are still happy to rent out their ground to either of these.

A ban on wild animals in circuses in England was due to have become law in 2015 but this has still not occurred. In 2017, the Scottish government published a bill proposing a ban, making it set to become the first country in the UK to introduce an outright ban on wild animals in circuses.

### What can you do?

- Only visit circuses that feature human only performers
- Pass on this factfile to anyone you know that is thinking of going to an animal circus
- Contact any landowners that allow animal circuses to use their ground and politely ask them to reconsider their decision
- Make a regular donation to support OneKind campaigns



**OneKind**

Ending cruelty  
to Scotland's animals

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