

# Animals in the Circus

## Telling the Truth

### Facts & Figures



The European Circus Association (ECA) is a non-profit organisation. Its objective is to promote classical circus arts and culture. The ECA has more than 60 members in 15 countries throughout Europe. Members are circus companies and enterprises, festivals of circus arts, and animal trainers. Associate members include circus suppliers, schools and circus enthusiasts. The ECA has produced this brochure so that the public will know and understand more about the care and training of circus animals and the ECA's heartfelt commitment to them.



## ECA code of conduct for animals

*ECA believes its members have the right to exhibit their animals.*

*The ECA believes that the exhibition of animals in the circus is educational as well as entertaining, and furthers the public's appreciation of the animals, their needs and their abilities.*

*The ECA supports the development of appropriate laws to govern the care of all animals and believes that any form of animal abuse or mistreatment is wrong and should be fully prosecuted.*

*The ECA encourages its members to support efforts to protect and conserve endangered species, including public education and participation in breeding programmes and scientific studies that promote the survival of these species in the wild.*

Members must comply with all applicable laws, regulations and guidelines as well as the following requirements:



A complete veterinary care programme must be developed and followed for each animal. Nutritious food, fresh water and exercise must be provided on a regular basis as appropriate for each species and individual. Trained staff must be on hand to monitor the animals and ensure their safety at all times.

*Text: European Circus Association*

*Pictures: Circus Voyage, Circus Krone, Circus Pliegenpilz, Circus Festival Latina*

*Design & Lay-out: Tony Rennings*



## HOUSING

Animals must be housed as appropriate for their species. They must be provided with protection from the weather, a clean dry stables / living area, fresh bedding, and freedom of movement within their enclosure. Suitable barriers must be in place between the public and the animals.



*“Good regulations based on internationally accepted standards for animal care and transport are the most appropriate way to ensure high quality animal care while at the same time preserving the rich and rewarding classical circus art form for the benefit of circus families, their animals and current and future generations of Europeans.”*

*H.S.H. Prince Rainier III of Monaco  
President, Festival International  
du Cirque de Monte-Carlo*

## TRANSPORTATION

Transportation of animals must be appropriate for the species and in accordance with professionally recognised standards and government regulatory regulations, where applicable.

## EMERGENCY PLANS

A plan must be in place to address emergency situations for caring for animals in the case of unusual events such as floods, heat waves, snow and windstorms and include measures to handle any animal escapes or provocation by animal rights activists or environmental terrorists.



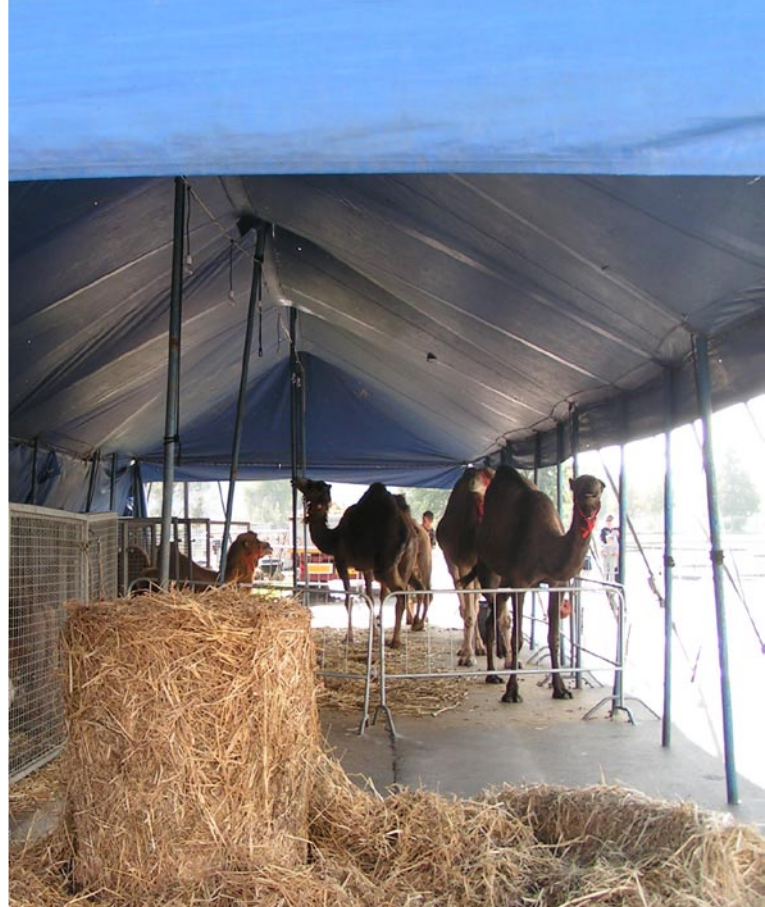


## **TRAINING**

All animal training must be based on operant conditioning and the use of positive reinforcement and repetition of desired behaviours. Training should showcase an animal's natural behaviours and athletics. Training must not place an animal in danger nor cause physical injury or psychological stress.

## **EXHIBITION**

All exhibit animals must be of suitable temperament and condition for exhibition and provided opportunity for adequate rest and time off exhibit.



## **PUBLIC CONTACT**

Animals used for rides, photographs or other public contact must be of suitable temperament and training for such activities and in good health. They must be allowed ample time off exhibit and should be removed from these activities at any time that they display aggressive or unpredictable behaviour. Trained staff must be on hand at all times that the public is interacting with animals and appropriate safety barriers must be in place between the animals and the public.

## **RETIREMENT**

Animals must be retired, at the appropriate time for the species and individual concerned, to good facilities with appropriate care and housing.

## **RECORD-KEEPING**

Complete individual records must be maintained for all animals, including health documents, ownership papers and required permits.



# Circus Animal Facts

The chance to be in contact with animals is one of the most popular and enduring aspects of a visit to the circus. For most people, a circus or zoo is the only opportunity they will have to see a real elephant or tiger up close and in person! Performing animals entertain and educate – and they remind us that we are responsible for their care, well-being and future survival on this planet. Circuses and animal performances are among the safest and most affordable forms of family entertainment.

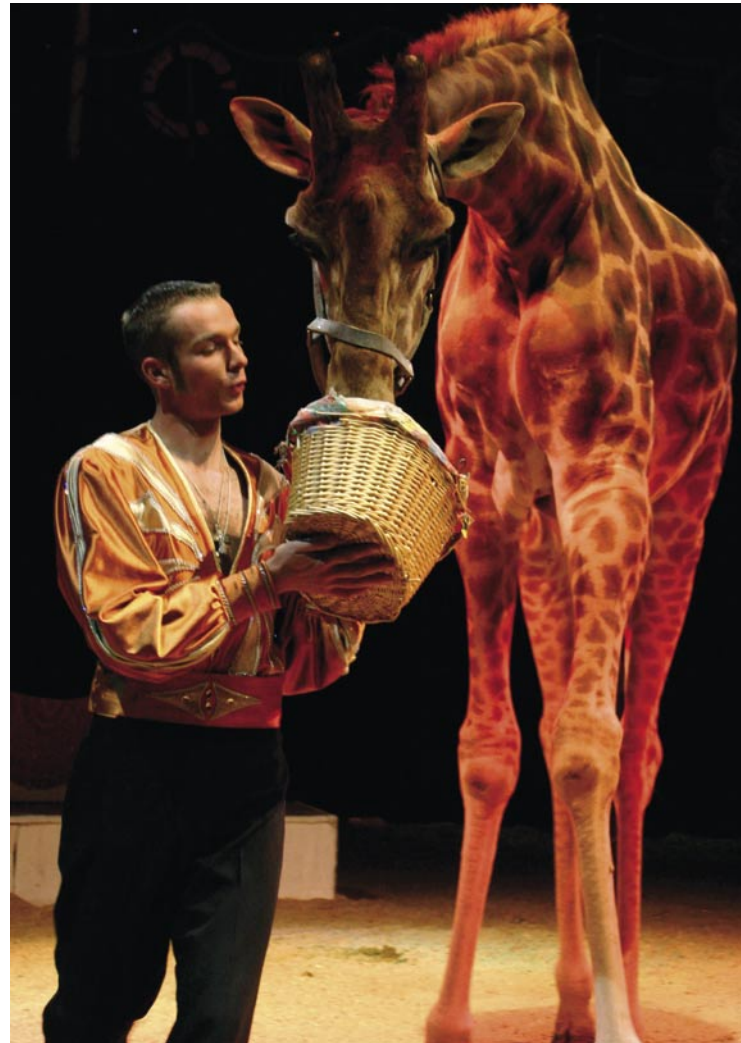
A positive, healthy environment is the only acceptable and successful method of training performing animals. The basis of accepted training methods is “positive reinforcement,” a system of repetition and rewards for desired behaviours.

Trainers carefully select animals for exhibition and performance based on the individual animal’s ability and personality. Exhibitions show an animal’s natural athletic abilities, performed on request.

Performing animals often live longer than their wild or more idle counterparts, due in part to their active and enriched lifestyle, which includes regular exercise and interaction with other animals and humans. Veterinary care, grooming and good nutrition also play an important role.

The longest living elephant in captivity in the western world is a retired circus animal in North America! People who go to circuses learn about the animals, their abilities, and the need to protect them in the wild. Veterinary, behavioural and other scientific information learned from captive animals helps conservationists make decisions to help conserve that species in the wild.

Public surveys show that animals are the number one attraction in the circus. one attraction in the circus.



*“I think what circus actually is about is showing people how absolutely marvellous these animals are. I mean they do amazing things. Jumping through rings and then managing to balance on amazing small little stools.*

*But [some people say] that is not ‘natural’...*

*Well where is the line to draw between natural and what is not natural? Because it is natural to learn! So why should we make a limit on what should be learned, as long as they are not suffering while they are being taught?”*

*Dr. Marthe Kiley-Worthington, renowned animal behaviourist.*

*Dr. Worthington’s study, outlined in her book **Chiron’s World**, finds performing animals to be healthy, active and socially enriched.*



# Frequently asked questions

## **Are circus animals treated well?**

Circus animal owners and handlers know that healthy, well-adjusted animals are better performers and easier to manage. Circus trainers and handlers are the true experts when it comes to animal care – our animals are treated like members of the family, loved and cared for from birth to retirement and beyond, just like your family pet. Performing animals live longer than other animals in captivity, and generally outlive their “cousins” in the wild, due to their active, healthy lifestyles, good veterinary care and nutrition.



## **Is it right to put animals in the circus?**

### **Don't they belong in the wild?**

Most circus animals today were born in captivity and have always lived with people. In fact, international law (CITES) generally prohibits commercial trade in endangered species taken from the wild. The truth is, for many of these animals, the wild is not a favourable environment. Habitats are being destroyed and the animals are vulnerable to disease, illegal hunting and natural predators. Coming into contact with animals in the circus helps educate people about the plight of animals in the wild and the need to protect them and their habitats.

## **Do circus animals die young due to exhibition and travel?**

On the contrary, circus and performing animals generally live longer than their cousins in zoos and in the wild. The most common cause of death in a circus animal is old age! Many animal experts and researchers attribute the longevity of circus animals to their active lifestyle and good physical and mental condition from interaction with other animals.

## **Do people still want to see animals in the circus when they can see them on TV?**

Animals are the number one attraction at circuses, according to industry and patron surveys. For many people, the circus provides the first or most memorable encounter with an elephant, tiger or other exotic animal. There is no substitute for the sight, sounds and smells of a live animal, and the opportunity to watch it work with its human companions. The circus also helps teach people about animals and the need to care for them properly, and to protect endangered animals in the wild.

## **Why are circus elephants chained?**

Similar to picket lines for horses, elephants are sometimes chained to keep them from wandering away or from interacting with other animals nearby. The chains are placed in a way that allow the animals to move freely, turn around and lie down. They are placed loosely on the feet. Metal material is used because it is easy to keep clean. They may also be chained during transportation, much as you would wear a seat belt for your safety. Chains also may be required by law in some places. In general, however, circus elephants are active and receive regular exercise and opportunities to move freely.

### **Who makes sure that circus animals are properly cared for?**

Circus owners, animal trainers, presenters and animal care staff all contribute to providing high quality animal care in conformity with applicable laws and regulations. In many places, government inspectors also work to ensure compliance with regulations. In addition, circuses employ or work with professional veterinarians and animal handlers to oversee the care and health of the animals. Most importantly, circus performances are viewed by thousands of people every day -making them the most closely-scrutinised of animal activities and providing an opportunity for the public to observe the care of the animals.

### **How do you train a circus animal?**

Like other trained animals, circus animals are trained by rewarding asked-for behaviours and repeating them often – a practice known as “positive reinforcement.” Performances display animals’ natural abilities or movements on cue. The animal’s disposition, ability and intelligence are taken into account during the training process. A trainer’s most important tools are trust and a personal relationship with the animal. Training requires communication, patience, understanding, repetition and reward.

### **Why is legislation proposed to ban or restrict animal performances?**

Support for this type of legislation comes from small and vocal, but well funded animal rights groups whose agenda does not represent the view of the majority of people. These groups often oppose the “use” of animals by humans in general and do not believe in eating meat, wearing fur or leather clothes or the use of animals for important medical research. Some of the groups go so far as to oppose animals as family pets! Taking animals out of the circus is just the first step in their plan to separate the human race completely from animals.

Millions of people enjoy the circus across Europe each year. ECA believes that people should continue to have the opportunity to learn for themselves about animals by visiting them in the circus, and welcomes all enquiries and comments.

For the sake of our devoted audience, and on behalf of the animals who are our valued working partners, the ECA will continue to work to preserve the great tradition of the classical circus, including performing animals.



## ECA Supports Conservation of Endangered Species

In keeping with its commitment to species conservation, the ECA has selected the International Elephant Foundation as its non-profit conservation organisation of choice for 2005 and asks for your support.

### Did you know?



The **African elephant** is the largest living mammal on earth, occupying a variety of habitats, from open grassland to forested areas to mountainous regions to semi-desert. African elephants are herbivores and can consume 60 to 125 kilos of food in a day! In fact, because of its great size, strength and need for enormous quantities of food and water, its impact on its environment can be severe. That coupled with poaching, habitat destruction and the encroachment of human populations on its habitat and migration routes have caused the rapid decline of wild elephant populations in many African countries.

**Asian elephants** live in forest habitats and are slightly smaller than African elephants. Asian elephants also are recognizable by their small, square ears, relatively smooth but often freckled skin, and a single projection or “finger” at the end of their trunks. Because of its gentle and intelligent nature, Asian elephants have worked with and for man for many centuries. In the wild, however, the Asian elephant is highly endangered, primarily because of loss of habitat. Some experts say the Asian elephant could become extinct in the wild within our lifetimes.



### How Can You Help?

#### Your Donation Can Make A World of Difference!

The International Elephant Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to support and operate elephant conservation and education programs, both in managed facilities and in the wild, with an emphasis on management, protection and scientific research.



Projects are selected by IEF's Board of Directors, which includes elephant professionals from the zoo, circus, public exhibition and academic communities with well-recognized expertise in the management, husbandry and care of captive elephants as well as broad experience with scientific and other aspects of conservation of wild elephants.

Your donation to IEF will help fund conservation efforts including habitat and species protection, improving elephant health and welfare, providing education and training for elephant caretakers and local communities, and research for the benefit of both Asian and African elephants. More than 90% of the funds raised go directly into elephant programs!

**To make a donation, please visit: [www.elephantconservation.org](http://www.elephantconservation.org)**

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