

## Help The Circus Animals

Applause fills the air as an enormous elephant does spectacular headstands! Those tigers- isn't it amazing how they leap through flaming rings? Most people have seen animals do these astonishing stunts. But they probably don't realize that these animals are forced, by people using torturing devices and abuse. People take their families to circuses for entertainment. They probably don't know what goes on behind the scenes, but I do, and it's awful.

"Don't *touch* 'em, *hurt* 'em! Make 'em scream!" are real quotes said during a Ringling Brothers circus training session. Trainers were stabbing elephants with "tools" to "inspire" them to learn performances! Can you believe that?!?! Sickeningly, animals are *often* trained through physical abuse, fear, and intimidation. Some implements used to train animals are: whips, muzzles, bullhooks, electric prods, chains, hammers, and clubs. Sometimes beatings get so severe that the trainer actually kills the animal!

Even traveling and just *living* are agonizing for circus animals! They travel up to fifty weeks yearly, from location to location. And when traveling, both big and active animals are kept in small railroad cars, chained or locked in cramped cages. They're even imprisoned when they're not traveling! In fact, the *only* time when circus animals aren't in chains or cages is when they're performing, then they're locked up again and shipped to the next town! And there's no heat or air conditioning in the railway cars, which makes it *more* unpleasant, as if it weren't bad enough! But it gets worse! During traveling and between shows, animals are deprived of food and water! They also become *extremely* lonely and stressed. Not only are the conditions they live in far from their natural habitat, they're hardly livable and can cause animals serious illness.

And does riding bicycles, dancing, and balancing balls remind you of natural animal behavior? Circus animals wouldn't willingly do any of those things. Circus performances are complicated and confusing, but animals must do them. It's do, die, or be severely beaten, which are all horrible, but there're no other choices. It's very difficult and uncomfortable for an elephant to stand on its head. And do you think tigers *want* to jump through rings of fire? Who would? It's torturous for circus animals to do harsh stunts, but they're imprisoned.

We need to do something about this! And there are things everyone- even kids - can do to help stop the horrible treatment of animals which are being used for entertainment. First, we should boycott entertainment that mistreats animals. Second, we can make our feelings known to our friends, to the media, to politicians that affect policy, and to the entertainment organizations that hurt animals. Third, we can volunteer for animal rights organizations and attend demonstrations to show support.

This horrible abuse of animals should be stopped, and together we can reach that goal.