Animals in the Circus

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Traveling circuses have captivated audiences for decades, but the hype surrounding these spectacles disguise a serious problem. Whilst the circus performers travel in comfortable automobiles and sleep in warm beds, the animals they employ in their acts stay in cramped cages that constantly jostle around in some dark dingy trailer. Even when they actually perform, these animals suffer stress and abuse. The use of animals as entertainment in the circus should be forbidden.

To begin with, performing animals suffer unnecessary and often dangerous amounts of stress not only while performing, but during transport as well. A general guideline for transporting animals calls for a cage that allows the animals to turn around and lie down comfortably. However, most circuses shackle the animals specifically to keep them from moving around in their cages (barely large enough to house the animal to begin with). In August 1997, police officers in Albuquerque, N.M. found a dead eight-year-old elephant inside King Royal Circus’ cramped trailer. Officials attribute the death to heat exhaustion because it was kept in a trailer that housed ten other animals and had only two small breathing holes to allow fresh air. This display of blatant disregard for such majestic creatures is barbaric and uncalled for.

Additionally, animals naturally behave wildly and could potentially harm circus performers or spectators. When an elephant refused a command to lie down, Ringling’s head elephant trainer, Sacha Houcke, allegedly beat the elephant with a bull hook, hooking her behind the ear, on the leg, and on the back. Because trainers often resort to abusive training techniques, the animals they train become violent and temperamental, prompting attacks on people. In 1994 an elephant named Tyke killed her handler, and then went on a rampage in the streets of Honolulu, injuring onlookers and damaging property. In the end, police had no choice but to gun down the rampaging elephant. Circuses can avoid such devastating events if they discontinue the employment of animals.

Furthermore, a decent circus should remain just as entertaining without employing animals. Circuses offer a multitude of delightful acts that focus on talented men and women earning a living doing what they love. Cirque du Soleil, arguably the most successful circus act, only employs willing human performers. The exhilarating routines consistently captivate crowds and no animals suffer in the process. Cirque du Soleil’s national recognition should come across as a positive example to promote the ban of animal involvement in the circus.

People may worry that generations to come will miss out on a circus tradition: After all, why should they care about the way animals are treated? If such a tradition involves the abuse and occasional death of animals, an alternative should come about. Children should learn to respect animals, not rely on them for entertainment. If the mistreatment of circus animals continues, some may become endangered and future generations would miss out in a worse way. People should start caring for the sake of a better world because no one would want to live in a world without animals.

Animals should no longer exist as a part of the circus’ attraction. Animals used for entertainment have to endure unhealthy amounts of stress, ultimately putting the safety of spectators and circus staff at risk. A circus can be adequately amusing without involving animals, and it should remain so. To set this prohibition in motion, only support animal-free circuses and spread awareness of the cruelty. Eliminate animal cruelty, eliminate needless suffering, eliminate worldly issues one by one.