

Circus Animals

Globally, thousands of wild animals are still forced to perform demeaning and unnatural tricks to entertain the public. They are exploited in travelling circuses, side-shows and within zoos, and used in advertising, film and television.

Animals are often made to perform 'stunts' and 'humanised' behaviours that are completely against their nature. Parrots riding bicycles, elephants standing on their heads or walking a tightrope, chimpanzees smoking cigarettes, and tigers jumping through hoops of fire are just some of the examples.

The training of wild animals often relies heavily on physical domination and fear, in an attempt to ensure the constant attention and compliance of the animal in front of an audience or camera. There have been numerous undercover investigations and reports from ex-trainers revealing evidence of systematic mistreatment and animal abuse.

In circuses, animals are transported from location to location, repeatedly loaded and unloaded, kept in small beast-wagons or chained within trucks. Similarly, animals used in the film industry are also routinely confined to cages between "takes". Research has shown that spending many hours travelling or confined to a small and unnatural environment can cause heightened stress responses in an animal, resulting in serious negative welfare impacts. Training, boredom and the frustration of trying to cope with these unnatural conditions often result in an animal developing abnormal behaviours.

Born Free believes that it is outdated and unacceptable to use wild animals in circuses or to market products by making animals perform unnatural behaviours. Such acts misrepresent the true nature of the animals; require the animals to be subjected to an unnatural and often abusive lifestyle; and undermine public respect for the natural world. Born Free challenges the use of wild animals in circuses and performance, raises awareness about the issues, and campaigns for national and international legislation to bring this practice to an end.