



PETA Factsheet

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus

USDA# 52-C-0137 (past # 58-C-0106), 8607 Westwood Center Dr., Vienna, VA 22182

In 2009, PETA recorded Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus employees for many months and in numerous U.S. states. Eight employees, including the head elephant trainer and the animal superintendent, were videotaped backstage repeatedly hitting elephants in the head, trunk, ears, and other sensitive body parts with bullhooks and other cruel training devices just before the animals would enter the arena for performances. (A bullhook is an elephant-training tool that resembles a fireplace poker.) A tiger trainer was videotaped beating tigers during dress rehearsals. Footage from the investigation can be viewed at RinglingBeatsAnimals.com.

Former Ringling employees have reported that elephants are routinely abused and violently beaten with bullhooks. In December 2009, PETA released dozens of photographs taken by a retired Ringling trainer named Sam Haddock. The photos reveal the violent training methods used on baby elephants at Ringling's Polk City, Florida, training center. The photos, which are available at RinglingBeatsAnimals.com, depict baby elephants bound with ropes and wrestled into physically difficult and uncomfortable positions by several adult men. According to Haddock's notarized statement, the elephants scream, cry, and struggle as they are stretched out, slammed to the ground, gouged with bullhooks, and shocked with electric prods. According to him, these violent training methods are the only way an elephant can be trained to perform in circuses. Elephants are also chained in filthy, poorly ventilated boxcars for an average of more than 26 straight hours—and as long as 60 to 100 hours at a time—when the circus travels (see "[Animal Care](#)").

Ringling has failed to meet minimal federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established by the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). Since 2000, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited Ringling numerous times for serious AWA noncompliances, including the following: improper handling of dangerous animals; failure to provide adequate veterinary care to animals including an elephant with a stiff leg, an elephant with a large swelling on her leg, elephants with abrasions, a camel with bloody wounds, and a camel injured on train tracks; causing trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, and unnecessary discomfort to two elephants who sustained injuries when they ran amok during a performance; endangering tigers who were nearly baked alive in a boxcar because of poor maintenance of their enclosures; failure to test elephants for tuberculosis; and unsanitary feeding practices (see "[Failure to Comply With Humane-Treatment Laws](#)"). The USDA has at least three open investigations of potential violations of the AWA by Ringling.

In 2004, a 2-year-old lion died from apparent heatstroke while the circus train crossed the Mojave Desert, and an 8-month-old baby elephant was euthanized when he fractured his hind legs after falling from a circus pedestal. In the late 1990s, Ringling paid \$20,000 to settle USDA charges that the circus had failed to provide veterinary care to a dying baby elephant. The circus also received warnings from the agency for inflicting painful rope lesions on two baby elephants as they were prematurely pulled from their mothers as well as for shooting a caged tiger to death.

Ringling's gold unit is leasing an elephant act from Carson & Barnes Circus. In a PETA undercover investigation, that circus's animal care director, Tim Frisco, was videotaped beating and shocking elephants and instructing others to hurt elephants with bullhooks until they scream in pain. Tim Frisco is the brother of Joe Frisco Jr., a Ringling elephant superintendent.

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com

PETA Factsheet

At least 29 elephants, including four babies, have died since 1992 (see “**Deaths**”). A human strain of tuberculosis has been diagnosed in 12 percent of captive Asian elephants in the U.S., including many at Ringling (see “**Elephant Tuberculosis**”). Fifty-seven of the approximately 62 elephants owned by Ringling in 1990 were captured in the wild.

Ringling employees have been arrested for sexual and violent crimes, including possessing child pornography, sexual battery, assault with a dangerous weapon, and aggravated bank robbery (see “**Criminal Activity**”). This factsheet also contains sections on “**Danger**,” “**Impeding Investigations**,” and “**Declining Popularity**.” Contact PETA for documentation.

DEATHS

July 7, 2011: Putzi, a 49-year-old female Asian elephant who had been captured in the wild and shipped to the circus as an infant in 1964, was euthanized.

June 20, 2011: Siam, a 60-year-old female Asian elephant who had been captured in the wild and shipped to the circus as an infant in 1954, was euthanized.

April 26, 2011: Ringling euthanized Lutzi, a 61-year-old female Asian elephant who had spent 56 years of her life with the circus. In a sworn deposition taken during Ringling’s 2009 trial to answer charges that its elephant-handling practices violated the federal Endangered Species Act, the general manager of Ringling’s Center for Elephant Conservation admitted that Lutzi and other elephants had been chained by two legs on a concrete floor for 16 hours a day.

March 19, 2010: Lima, a zebra who fled the circus and ran loose through downtown Atlanta for more than 40 minutes, was euthanized as a result of injuries he sustained during his escape.

January 8, 2010: Ringling euthanized Josky, a 43-year-old female Asian elephant who was captured in the wild in 1967.

July 18, 2008: Calcutta, a 62-year-old Asian elephant who was captured in the wild in India and shipped to U.S. circuses as an infant, was euthanized by the circus.

September 11, 2006: An Asian elephant died from unreported causes. The circus did not announce this death.

August 31, 2005: An Asian elephant named Gildah died. Gildah was captured in the wild and used in Siegfried & Roy’s casino act. She was kept in solitary confinement at the Mirage Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas. Feld Entertainment refused a USDA recommendation to conduct a necropsy on Gildah.

August 10, 2005: According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, an 11-day-old elephant named Bertha died. The circus did not announce her birth or death.

October 9, 2004: A 44-year-old Asian elephant named Roma was euthanized because of osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death. A necropsy revealed that Roma had tuberculosis.

August 5, 2004: An 8-month-old elephant named Riccardo was euthanized after suffering severe and irreparable fractures to both hind legs when he fell off a circus pedestal. Riccardo was undersized when he was born to Shirley, a Ringling elephant, in December 2003. Failing to wait until Shirley was 18 years old, when she would have been physically and emotionally ready to raise offspring, Ringling used Shirley for breeding when she was only 7 years old (see “Animal Care,” December 5, 2003). Riccardo may have been afflicted with a bone disorder caused by malnourishment because his mother was unable to nurse him.

July 13, 2004: According to an affidavit by former Ringling lion handler Frank Hagan, a 2-year-old lion named Clyde died while traveling through the intense heat of the Mojave Desert in a poorly ventilated boxcar without being checked or given water. The lion is believed to have died from heatstroke and dehydration.

July 1, 2004: A 53-year-old Asian elephant named Calcutta 2 died because of an aortic aneurysm. The circus did not announce this death. Calcutta 2 had previously tested positive for tuberculosis (see “Elephant Tuberculosis,” April 16, 2001).

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

May 11, 2004: Two Ringling horses were struck by a freight train as they were being unloaded from the circus train near Dayton, Ohio. One horse died instantly, and the other was euthanized at the scene.

January 24, 2003: An Asian elephant was euthanized because of osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death.

December 22, 2002: A 57-year-old Asian elephant named King Tusk was euthanized because of osteoarthritis.*

June 1, 2001: A 7-year-old Bengal tiger named Jasmine was euthanized due to chronic renal disease. The circus did not announce this death.

May 25, 2001: A 34-year-old Asian elephant named Birka was euthanized due to abdominal neoplasia at Ringling's breeding compound. The circus did not announce this death.

April 30, 2001: An Asian elephant died due to chronic osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death.

April 12, 2001: An Asian elephant was euthanized due to chronic osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death.

March 7, 2001: An Bengal tiger was euthanized because of tumors in her ear canals and sinuses. The circus did not announce this death.

August 5, 2000: An Asian elephant was euthanized due to degenerative osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death.

August 1, 2000: An Bengal tiger was euthanized due to degenerative osteoarthritis.* The circus did not announce this death.

October 28, 1999: A 52-year-old Asian elephant named Teetchie was euthanized due to multiple joints affected by osteoarthritis* and an *M. tuberculosis* infection of the lung. The circus did not announce this death.

July 26, 1999: Benjamin, a 4-year-old baby elephant who had been removed from his mother before she could teach him to swim, drowned when he stepped into a pond while the circus was traveling through Texas. Benjamin drowned as he tried to move away from a trainer who was poking him with a bullhook. According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, Benjamin was removed from his mother when he was only 1 year old.

February 22, 1999: A horse collapsed and died during Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's animal march to the Scope Convention Center in Norfolk, Virginia. A PETA videographer captured the horse's collapse on film despite Ringling workers' attempts to obstruct the camera. Although Ringling claims that a veterinarian is available to its animals 24 hours a day, there was no veterinarian on duty when the horse was in urgent need of medical care. According to the necropsy, Ringling was aware of this animal's delicate condition yet kept him on the road anyway.

September 3, 1998: According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, a 40-year-old elephant named Dolly died. Ringling did not announce this death.

August 31, 1998: A 12-year-old wild-caught sea lion named Gypsy was found dead in her transport container in Moline, Illinois. In the wild, sea lions can live to be 20 years old.

January 24, 1998: A 3-year-old baby elephant named Kenny was forced to perform in two shows while the circus was in Jacksonville, Florida, despite obvious signs of illness. According to the circus's animal care log, Kenny was "not eating or drinking," was "bleeding from his rectum ... had a hard time standing, was very shaky, walked very slowly," and "passed a large amount of blood from his rectum." The log noted that at 11:30 p.m., "the elephant was dead."

January 7, 1998: Ringling trainer Graham Chipperfield shot a Bengal tiger named Arnie five times while he was locked in his cage, killing him in retaliation for an attack against Graham's brother, Richard, during a photo shoot.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

May 22, 1996: An elephant named Seetna who was euthanized due to prolonged dystocia (difficult labor). According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, Seetna was 30 years old when she died. In elephants, dystocia often indicates that the fetus has died and is decomposing in the uterus. The circus did not announce this death.

1995: According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, the following Ringling elephants died: 53-year-old Cita, 53-year-old Ranni, 45-year-old Rhani, and 34-year-old Karnaudi. The circus did not announce these deaths.

August 8, 1994: According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, a 41-year-old elephant named Jenny died. Ringling did not announce this death.

1992: According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, the following Ringling elephants died: a 26-year-old male named Petely, 50-year-old Nelly, and 50-year-old Mia.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH HUMANE-TREATMENT LAWS

August 25, 2011: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to handle animals in a manner that prevents physical harm after a tiger named Kimba had her tail caught in the gait of a transfer cage. Kimba suffered a laceration on her tail that was “about 1½ inches long and ½ wide.” Ringling was also cited for forcing Banko, a 35-year-old Asian elephant, to perform even though she was “experiencing pain and distress” while suffering from diarrhea and abdominal comfort that required pain medication. Her condition was probably linked to sand colic, a potentially deadly medical condition.

June 10, 2011: The USDA gave Ringling a repeat citation for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to a female Asian elephant named Sarah, whom circus veterinarians reported as having possible necrotic tumors on her reproductive organs or a condition known as pyometra, a bacterial infection that causes the uterus to fill with pus and become septic. Sarah reportedly had an elevated white-blood-cell count indicative of infection, and Ringling also acknowledged that she had a chronic fistula (an abnormal connection) between her rectum and her vagina. The inspector wrote that there is a discrepancy between what was written in Sarah’s medical records, what the circus’s on-site veterinarian said, and the treatment that she was receiving from handlers. Additionally, Ringling was given a repeat citation for failure to maintain primary-transport enclosures in a manner that prevents injury to the animals.

November 18, 2010: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain an adequate program of veterinary care for a young elephant who had chronic lameness. The inspector wrote that “the licensee has not conducted adequate diagnostics, developed an adequate treatment plan, or ensured that the elephant received prescribed treatments.” The USDA also cited Ringling for failure to maintain primary transport enclosures in a manner that prevents injury to the animals and for interfering with the inspection for over an hour, during which time it refused the USDA personnel access to the areas where the animals could be inspected.

November 4, 2010: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain an adequate program of veterinary care because it had kept expired drugs in stock and other pharmaceutical drugs had no expiration date listed.

August 17, 2010: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to store food in a manner that protects against deterioration or contamination after ripped fiberglass insulation panels installed in the hay barn at Ringling’s Polk City, Florida, training center were found to be “hanging down in the direction of the hay underneath.” The report continued, “The hay could become contaminated with fiberglass and compromise the well-being of the animals.”

February 19, 2010: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to keep an elephant under the direct control of a handler. The incident occurred while the animal was being walked into an arena for a pre-show in Greenville, South Carolina. The USDA citation stated, “This noncompliance presents a safety risk to the animal, individual handlers, and the public” (see “Danger,” February 7, 2010). Ringling was also cited for failure to provide an adequate outer perimeter fence for the hoofstock after a zebra “bolted away from a caretaker” on February 18, 2010, in Atlanta, Georgia (see “Deaths,” March 19, 2010, and “Danger,” February 19, 2010).

July 28, 2009: The USDA issued a statement regarding PETA’s allegations that Ringling employees abused elephants and tigers during an undercover investigation that lasted several months, stating that the “USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has initiated a thorough investigation into these allegations.”

March 12, 2009: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain the primary enclosures for the elephants and big cats at its Williston, Florida, facility in a manner that would prevent injury to the animals. The USDA also cited Ringling for

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

an unsanitary food storage area that was contaminated with rodent droppings as well as failure to properly maintain a perimeter fence behind a tiger's enclosure.

March 11, 2009: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to repair damaged perimeter fencing around elephant enclosures at its breeding compound. The inspector wrote that the perimeter fence "had evidence of small mammal tracks and paths and several areas where gaps were ... large enough for a person to crawl under the fence."

April 10, 2008: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to handle two zebras in a manner that would eliminate the potential for physical harm or stress after they escaped while the circus was performing in Baltimore, Maryland.

April 9 2008: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain the tigers' transport cages, failure to clean and repair the tigers' transport vehicle, improper storage of food and bedding, a filthy food preparation area, and unsanitary feeding practices.

February 20, 2008: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have adequate perimeter fencing (which is required for potentially dangerous animals) around two tigers.

January 11, 2008: The USDA cited Ringling for inadequate housing, which could have failed to safely contain six dogs and restrict other animals from access.

December 11, 2007: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain records of acquisition and disposition for its tigers.

September 19, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have a perimeter fence around dangerous animals that met the height requirement of 8 feet at its Williston facility. A similar citation was issued in 2003 at the same location.

July 11, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for improper handling of dangerous animals by failing to ensure that appropriate security was provided when the train containing the animals was stopped on the railroad tracks. The inspector wrote, "[T]hree APHIS personnel ... were able to approach and walk unchallenged directly to the open doors of the elephant cars" and stressed that "under these circumstances a member of the public would have been able to enter the cars and approach the animals, thus jeopardizing their own safety, or place items inside the cars that could adversely affect the well-being of the animals."

May 24, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to an elephant named Jewel who has an abnormal gait and stiff front left leg. The inspector found that Jewel's stiffness did not disappear within a few minutes of walking as claimed by Ringling's veterinarian.

May 18, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to dispose of expired medications.

May 3, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide adequate veterinary care and maintain medical records for an elephant with a large swelling on her rear leg. Ringling did not have the prescribed medication on hand and the staff was unaware that the medication needed to be administered.

March 31, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain the zebra enclosure.

February 15, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide veterinary care to a camel with two actively bleeding wounds.

January 6 & 17, 2006: The USDA cited Ringling for causing trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, and unnecessary discomfort to two elephants, Rudy and Angelica, who sustained cuts and scrapes from arena seats after becoming startled by a barking dog while performing in Puerto Rico. Ringling was also cited for failure to provide a safety barrier between the elephants and the public.

October 5, 2005: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain medical care records "for all the elephants, and Gunther in particular." There was no treatment plan for Gunther, who had been suffering from a lesion for at least five months.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

September 22, 2005: The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission issued a verbal warning to Ringling for having elephant enclosure fences of insufficient height and no shelter in a paddock at its Williston facility.

September 7, 2005: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to dispose of expired and undated tuberculosis drugs. The inspector also indicated that Ringling transported an elephant named Siam from the Williston facility to the breeding compound. Ringling's tuberculosis-infected elephants are kept at Williston. Siam tested positive for tuberculosis in 1999 (see "Elephant Tuberculosis," April 16, 2001).

September 6, 2005: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide shade to an elephant named Doc who was in an outdoor pen "that does not provide any shade or shelter" at Ringling's breeding compound in Polk City, Florida.

January 26, 2005: A USDA inspector noted on an inspection report that elephants Gunther (age 3) and Angelica (age 7) had nail lesions.*

July 13, 2004: The USDA launched a formal investigation into the death of a 2-year-old lion named Clyde. According to a former Ringling employee, Clyde died after traveling through the intense heat of the Mojave Desert in a poorly ventilated boxcar.

February 20, 2003: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have a complete perimeter fence around dangerous animals at its Williston facility.

December 16, 2002: The USDA cited Ringling for keeping alpacas and goats in areas with an accumulation of debris that included wood with sharp pointed nails sticking up.

December 5, 2002: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have an appropriate perimeter fence around dangerous animals at its winter quarters.

November 7, 2002: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have four elephants tested for tuberculosis and for failure to store food in a manner that protects it from contamination.

February 21, 2002: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to dispose of expired medication, for improper feeding, and for poor sanitation.

August 25, 2001: California humane officers charged Mark Oliver Gebel, son of animal trainer Gunther Gebel-Williams, with cruelty to animals for striking and wounding an Asian elephant with a sharp metal bullhook. Gebel allegedly inflicted the injury when the elephant, named Asia, hesitated before entering the performance ring at the Compaq Center in San Jose, California.

August 24, 2001: Ringling was fined \$200.00 by the city of San Jose, California, for allowing a yak to run at large and cause a public nuisance.

August 20, 2001: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide access for inspection of animals, records, and property at its retirement center.

May 3, 2001: The USDA cited Ringling for improper food storage.

February 20, 2001: The USDA cited Ringling for improper food storage.

September 7, 2000: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide adequate veterinary care. The inspector wrote, "There is no documentation maintained on elephants that have minor lesions, scars, or abrasions. ... Records of medical treatment were not available on the camel that recently had both rear feet caught in a train track." Ringling was also cited for storing the animals' food near toxic substances and failure to maintain transport enclosures that could not be properly cleaned and sanitized.

July 12, 2000: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide adequate care in transit, failure to provide drinking water, and failure to maintain transport enclosures. The inspector wrote, "[A]nimals must be visually observed at least every four hours. ... Tiger transport vehicle is inaccessible as long as train is in motion. ... [I]t is not clear if the opportunity to water the tigers every 12 hours is available. ... Tiger transport design has allowed excessively high

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

temperatures during routine transport. ... Vent failure pushed these temperatures to a point of immediate danger to the animals.”

July 5, 2000: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain the structural strength of its tiger enclosures. Two tigers had injured themselves attempting to escape cages in which an excessive rise in temperature occurred when faulty vent doors blew shut. One tiger tore at the cage, tearing the track from the door and breaking off a tooth. A tiger in another enclosure suffered an injury above the eye caused by the same faulty vent-door problem.

June 16, 2000: USDA spokesperson Jim Rogers told the *Austin American-Statesman* that the agency has two investigations pending against Ringling Bros. for possible AWA violations.

February 22, 2000: Ringling was cited for failure to maintain a transport-shift cage for the tigers because it had a hole in the floor. The USDA also cited Ringling for failure to provide minimum space for the dogs and failure to identify dogs and cats with USDA tags.

November 9, 1999: The USDA cited Ringling (for the second time) for tiger cages in need of repair. The inspector noted an elephant with chronic arthritis* was continuously housed on concrete instead of a more comfortable surface such as rubber for large hoofed animals. A female Asian elephant named Teetchie with a history of thin body condition and who tested positive for tuberculosis on September 11, 1999, was euthanized on October 28, 1999.

August 23, 1999: According to an inspection conducted by South Bay Animal Control Services, seven Ringling elephants were found to have multiple lacerations. A zoo veterinarian who reviewed photographs of these and other injuries concluded, “The majority of the wounds documented in these photographs are fresh, actively draining puncture wounds caused by an ankus or hook.”

May 27, 1999: The USDA cited Ringling for tiger cages in need of repair and locking mechanisms, as well as for failure to dispose of medications that had expired as far back as February 1996.

May 11, 1999: In a letter to Ringling Bros., USDA Deputy Administrator Ron DeHaven wrote, “We have completed our review of the lesions observed on two juvenile elephants, Doc and Angelica, during the inspection of the Center for Elephant Conservation in Polk City, Fla., on February 9, 1999. ... [W]e find that the handling of these two elephants was not in compliance with the Animal Welfare Act regulations. ... We believe there is sufficient evidence to confirm the handling of these animals caused unnecessary trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, and discomfort to these two elephants.”

February 9, 1999: A USDA report indicated wounds on the baby elephants’ legs from separating them from their mothers. The report stated, “[T]here were large visible lesions on the rear legs of both Doc and Angelica (baby elephants). When questioned as to the cause of these lesions, it was stated by Mr. Jim Williams and Mr. Gary Jacobson that ‘these scars were caused by rope burns, resulting from the separation process from the mothers on January 6, 1999.’ Angelica’s lesion appeared as a pink linear scar, approximately 6” long and 1” wide on the right rear leg. The left rear leg also had a scar directly below the cloth leg tie. Both lesions appeared to have been treated with an iodine-based ointment. Angelica also had two linear healing scars on the back of the right hind leg. Doc had a pink scar on the right rear mid-leg area.” (Both baby elephants were just under 2 years old when taken from their mothers. In the wild, female elephants remain with their mothers their entire lives and males for up to 15 years.) Tuberculosis tests for one elephant were not available for review. No treatment was instituted for another elephant with positive tuberculosis status.

December 9, 1998: A USDA inspector noted on an inspection report that an elephant with confirmed tuberculosis was euthanized. The inspector also noted that three elephants did not have adequate shade and that an elephant named Congo had intermittent lameness and what appeared to be hyperkeratosis (a skin condition).

October 7, 1998: A USDA inspection of Ringling’s elephants found three with lameness and one with lacerations on her forehead.

October 1, 1998: The USDA cited Ringling for having a damaged transport enclosure for the hippopotamus.

September 11, 1998: A USDA inspector noted on an inspection report that three elephants (32-year-old Lechamee, 28-year-old Sofie, and 42-year-old Mini) had suffered from arthritis* for at least 12 years.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

August 28, 1998: Ringling was charged by the USDA with AWA violations for the death of Kenny, a baby Asian elephant forced to perform in Jacksonville, Florida, despite his being sick. The USDA charged the circus with failure to provide veterinary care to Kenny, and Ringling paid \$20,000 to settle the case out of court.

June 9, 1998: Ringling was cited by the USDA for failure to provide records of veterinary care for an elephant named Seetna who was euthanized due to prolonged dystocia (difficult labor).

March 26, 1998: The USDA issued Ringling a “strong letter of warning” for the killing of Arnie, a Bengal tiger. An angry trainer shot Arnie five times with a 12-gauge shotgun while he was locked in his cage.

September 5, 1997: The USDA cited Ringling (for the second time) for improper food storage. The inspector noted that a complaint about a lame elephant could not be verified because “the circus could not allow the elephants to move freely.”

July 24, 1997: The USDA cited Ringling for unsanitary food storage.

February 3, 1997: The circus was cited for failure to correct a previously identified violation of unsanitary food storage.

January 21, 1997: The USDA cited Ringling for inadequate storage of animals’ food.

December 20, 1996: The USDA cited Ringling for not providing environmental enrichment for primates. The USDA inspector stated, “There is no enhancement plan developed. The primates show signs of stereotypic behaviors (rocking, weaving, shaking, and cage-bar chewing and licking). All primates are housed singly. Cages have no enrichment.” Ringling was also cited for not providing adequate space for a baboon. Additionally, the inspector cited Ringling for not providing adequate shelter for a hippo. He stated, “The length of the hippo is greater than the width of the hippo pool.”

August 14, 1996: The USDA cited Ringling for not giving the elephants tetanus vaccinations, deworming, or fecal exams.

December 7, 1995: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to maintain tiger cages, failure to provide records of disposition for 10 elephants no longer on the premises, and improper food storage.

December 5, 1995: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to allow access to its property for an animal welfare inspection.

September 20, 1995: The USDA cited Ringling for not having a program of veterinary care. There was also no record of tetanus vaccinations.

June 8, 1995: The USDA cited Ringling for improper food storage.

February 14, 1995: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have an exercise program for the animals, as well as for animal enclosures that were in need of repair.

November 10, 1994: The USDA observed that Ringling was storing animal food in an unsanitary manner.

October 18, 1994: During a routine USDA inspection, an elephant was being beaten by a Ringling trainer. The USDA inspector stated, “Upon entering facility, I heard yelling and the sound of someone hitting something. I observed an elephant trainer hitting an elephant with the wooden end of the handling tool to get it up.” A USDA inspector cited Ringling for failure to handle animals in such a way that there is minimal risk of harm to the animal and the public. Additionally, the inspector wrote, “Animals shall not be housed near animals that interfere with their health or cause them discomfort.”

January 21, 1994: A USDA inspector cited Ringling for electrical wires hanging loose inside a lion’s cage, causing the potential for injury or death.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

December 29, 1993: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide minimum space for dogs and for inadequate lighting in the dog enclosure. The boxes were too small “for most dogs to stand, sit, lie, and turn about freely.” Ringling was cited for failure to correct previously identified violations of not providing minimum space for bears, including one bear with rub marks; failure to repair the lion cages; and improper food storage.

December 14, 1993: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to provide bears with the minimum space required by the federal AWA. Ringling also failed to provide a program for exercise.

ANIMAL CARE

February 8, 2011: Ringling’s parent company, Feld Entertainment, released a press statement announcing that a two 2-year-old elephant named Barack has been taken off the road after veterinarians noticed early symptoms of the deadly endotheliotropic herpesvirus and Barack tested positive for the virus. This is the second time the virus has been found in Barack’s blood; he recovered from an initial diagnosis last year (see “Animal Care,” February 3, 2010). One of the leading threats to young, captive elephants, this virus is strongly associated with stress and “usually has a fatal outcome within a week of the onset of symptoms.”

February 3, 2010: PETA confirmed that a baby elephant named Barack was taken off the road because he had become infected with the deadly endotheliotropic herpesvirus. Stress is believed to be a factor in developing the elephant herpes virus infection. Barack was not even 1 year old when Ringling transported him from the Polk City, Florida, training center to the Florida State Fairgrounds in Tampa in December. On January 26, the circus announced that Barack was being taken off the road after appearing in circus shows in Orlando and Jacksonville.

July 22, 2009: PETA released the findings of its months-long undercover investigation into Ringling and documented dozens of incidents in which numerous Ringling employees, including an animal superintendent and a head elephant trainer, hit elephants on the head, trunk, and ears with bullhooks, and a tiger trainer whipped tigers. PETA filed complaints with the USDA, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with law enforcement agencies in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Alabama, and Virginia. Footage from the investigation is available at RinglingBeatsAnimals.com and shows trainers hitting elephants backstage just before the elephants were forced to perform for the audience and whipping tigers during practice sessions.

March 18, 2009: Evidence was presented during a federal lawsuit alleging that Ringling’s routine abuse of Asian elephants violates the Endangered Species Act. The evidence revealed that elephants are chained for an average of more than 26 hours at a time, sometimes as long as 60 to 100 hours straight; that the CEO of Feld Entertainment, which owns Ringling, witnessed handlers hitting elephants with bullhooks; that Ringling’s own animal behaviorist saw an elephant who had been struck with a bullhook dripping blood on the arena floor during a show; that in an e-mail, a Ringling veterinary assistant reported, “After this morning’s baths, at least 4 of the elephants came in with multiple abrasions and lacerations from the [bull]hooks. ... The [lacerations] were very visible ... [A handler] applied ... wonder dust just before the show”; and that another internal report documented that Troy Metzler, a longtime Ringling elephant trainer, struck Angelica, a female Asian elephant, three to five times while she was held in stocks before unloading her and then shocking her with an electric prod.

November 11, 2008: PETA contacted Feld Entertainment, which owns Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, and urged the company to stop leasing its tiger act from trainer Lance Ramos, aka Lancelot Kollmann, after the USDA confiscated an emaciated 21-year-old elephant from the trainer. The elephant, who was approximately 1 ton underweight, was so badly undernourished that his ribs, spine, and shoulder blades were protruding.

May 21, 2008: The Associated Press reported on records presented by several animal welfare groups pertaining to a federal lawsuit that was filed in 2000: “In federal court papers filed in Washington, the groups said Ringling Bros.’ own train records show the Asian elephants are chained in boxcars for an average of more than 26 straight hours, and often 60 to 70 hours at a time, when the circus travels. In some cases, the elephants have been chained on trains for 90 to 100 hours.”

November 3, 2006: Former Ringling employees Bob Tom and Archele Hundley provided PETA with signed statements that described routine abuse of animals. Among their allegations: an elephant was left covered with blood after a violent beating that lasted for 30 minutes, a horse was whipped with the metal snap on a lead for 10 minutes and was later found to have a broken tooth, a miniature horse was knocked senseless after he was repeatedly slugged in the face with such force that the sound of the handler’s fist hitting the horse’s face could be heard 20 feet away, and the elephants were forced to stand in mountains of foul-smelling feces and urine during transport.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

April 12, 2006: PETA supplied the USDA with videotape showing elephant trainer Troy Metzler abusively hooking elephants, elephants kept on the road in spite of crippling arthritis,* and elephants who were suffering from painful pressure wounds. Two elephant experts confirmed that Metzler's acts of hooking are clear abuse and that Ringling's lame elephants should not be traveling or performing.

March 2, 2006: Professional dancer Jodey Eliseo, who toured with Ringling Bros. for two years in the 1980s, wrote to a Chicago alderman in support of pending legislation that would ban bullhooks. Eliseo wrote that she saw an elephant forced to perform with a huge infected boil that covered half her leg; Ringling handlers who beat an elephant for stumbling during a performance; teenage elephant Sophie covered with bullhook wounds from constant beatings; and a baby elephant who was severely beaten as punishment for running amok and smashing through a wall at a civic center.

November 16, 2005: According to the *East Valley Tribune*, "Reba and Sheena came [to Phoenix Zoo] from Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation after years of circus performing, zoo officials said. Negative reinforcement, such as hits and pokes, along with years of doing unnatural tricks, caused the elephants to become aggressive and dangerous. ... Reba [who once killed a circus trainer] pulled on her own nipples and Sheena was angry and withdrawn. All were threatening to zookeepers and dangerous to one another. ... 'When you think about these animals, they had traumatic lives,' [said Geoff Hall, Phoenix Zoo vice president of living collections]."

September 6, 2005: During an examination, the USDA confirmed that a 3-year-old elephant named Gunther, who toured with Ringling's Home Edition (Gold Unit) had suffered from lameness.

August 25, 2004: According to the *Oakland Tribune*, Oakland Zoo elephant manager Colleen Kinzley described a video showing a Ringling handler hitting and jabbing an elephant as clear abuse. Kinzley also commented on video showing a chained elephant swaying neurotically, saying, "For such a young animal to be exhibiting that amount of abnormal behavior is just tragic."

July 31, 2004: According to an affidavit by former Ringling employee Frank Hagan, Ringling's elephant trainer Troy Metzler, nicknamed "Captain Hook" by circus staff, was frequently observed abusively hooking elephants, including babies, with a metal-spiked bullhook.

December 5, 2003: An elephant named Shirley, who was bred by Ringling when she was only 7 years old, gave birth to an undersized calf. Elephants in the wild begin mating at age 18. Studies show that captive elephants who breed before age 12 have shorter lifespans.

December 12, 2003: Ringling's parent company, Feld Entertainment, has refused repeated requests, including one from celebrity P!nk, to send its elephant Gildah to a sanctuary. Gildah was captured in the wild and used in Siegfried & Roy's casino act. Gildah lived a lonely life in solitary confinement at the Mirage Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas until her death in 2005.

October 6, 2002: Veterinarian Gretchen Steininger, hired by Ringling to provide medical care and defend its use of animals, as reported in the *Macomb Daily*, while the circus was in Michigan, was fined \$500 and reprimanded for negligence and incompetence by the Michigan Department of Consumer & Industry Services on June 22, 2002.

May 6, 2001: Ringling subjected a tiger in advanced stages of pregnancy to stressful conditions associated with transport. Four tiger cubs were born on the road while the circus was performing in Columbus, Ohio.

April 8, 2001: According to *The New York Times*, a Ringling spokesperson admitted that a trainer who had been videotaped tormenting elephants was still on elephant duty.

2001: Ringling's red unit is leasing five elephants, including its star attraction, a male elephant named Bo, from the George Carden Circus. On May 1, 2001, the Canadian Broadcasting Corp. reported that two George Carden Circus employees had pleaded guilty to cruelty to animal charges in provincial court in St. John's, Newfoundland, and that each had been fined \$200. The charges were brought after investigators found bears kept in filthy, undersized cages for 23 hours a day. The judge stated that he wished the legislation were stronger so that he could penalize the defendants more and suggested that people stay away from the circus.

June 13, 2000: According to congressional testimony provided by former Ringling Bros. barn man Tom Rider, "[Elephants] live in confinement, and they are beaten all the time when they don't perform properly. ... When I became

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

disturbed about the treatment of the elephants, the continual beatings, including the baby Benjamin, I was told, 'That's discipline.'"

May 22, 2000: A horse found suffering from life-threatening colic as the Ringling train was traveling through Pennsylvania had to wait three hours for treatment while employees searched for a large-animal veterinarian.

April 17, 2000: In comments submitted to the USDA, Ringling opposes language in the agency's "Draft Policy on Training and Handling of Potentially Dangerous Animals" that reads, "Hot shots, shocking collars, or shocking belts should not be used for training or to handle the animals during exhibition, and any such use will be closely scrutinized. An ankus may not be used in an abusive manner that causes wounds or other injuries."

1992: Ringling disposed of five tigers who were of no use to the circus by giving them to New Jersey resident Joan Byron-Marasek, who owns a poorly maintained private menagerie. One of the Ringling tigers killed four other tigers at the facility. Byron-Marasek has been charged by the USDA with failing to provide adequate veterinary care and maintain programs of disease control and prevention for her tigers, and she was charged by state officials with overcrowded conditions.

DANGER

February 19, 2010: According to The Associated Press, Lima, a zebra traveling with Ringling in Atlanta, "broke away from his trainers and bumped up against a fence, then wriggled through an opening." The animal then "galloped along a busy section of interstate." Lima led police and trainers on a 40-minute chase through downtown before being captured. A man who was startled by the fleeing zebra told *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "All of a sudden a freaking zebra comes running down the street like a car." He continued, "Five or six police cars were in hot pursuit. And a bunch of officers on foot." The zebra was later euthanized as a result of injuries he sustained.

February 7, 2010: According to *The State*, "A startled elephant took a wrong turn backstage and broke through the main prop door leading into the Colonial Life Arena during the afternoon pre-show for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus About 100 spectators on the floor watching the pre-show saw the elephant break through the door toward them and rumble around the performance area, just a few feet away." The pre-show ended early as a result of the incident.

March 22, 2008: According to The Associated Press, three zebras, Mali, Giza, and Lima, escaped from the 1st Mariner Arena located in downtown Baltimore, Maryland, and dashed into traffic. The same three zebras had escaped in June 2007 during the circus's Colorado visit.

January 15, 2008: The *Miami New Times* reported that Ringling Bros. issued a statement claiming that Ringling elephant trainer Joe Frisco Jr. "received minor injuries after falling while walking with a juvenile elephant in the elephant barn in Miami." PETA had received a whistleblower report alleging that Frisco was actually attacked by an elephant named P.T. and sustained injuries severe enough to send him to the hospital. During trial testimony on March 9, 2009, Ringling trainer Gary Jacobson confirmed that Joe Frisco Jr. was knocked down by P.T. Frisco is the brother of elephant trainer Tim Frisco, who was caught on tape viciously beating elephants with bullhooks and shocking them with electric prods for the Carson & Barnes Circus.

June 16, 2007: According to The Associated Press, four zebras and three horses who were being walked into an arena for practice became spooked. The animals reportedly ran loose along a road near a busy interstate for 30 minutes while Ringling was performing in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

April 13, 2005: Elephant handler David Mannes was airlifted to a medical center to treat a fractured pelvis and soft tissue wound to his arm after being knocked down and kicked by an elephant named Tova while feeding the elephants at Ringling's breeding compound in Polk City, Florida.

June 13, 2000: Congressional testimony by Tom Rider, a former Ringling employee, identifies Ringling's elephant Karen as a killer: "Although she was the most dangerous elephant in the group, she is the one they used in the three-ring adventure where the public is allowed to stand around the elephant with no safety net or other protection around her. Karen had a habit of knocking anyone who came into range, slamming them into the ground, yet they allowed her to have contact with the audience."

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

September 1999: Two frightened zebras who were tethered together escaped twice from their handler and ran toward a main street while being transferred from the arena between performances in San Jose, California.

November 1998: Three tigers escaped from their cage in a Chicago parking lot. A Ringling handler was hospitalized in serious condition with bite wounds over much of his body when he was attacked by one of the tigers.

September 30, 1995: A Ringling lion bit off the index finger of a 31-year-old woman attending the circus.

May 6, 1993: A Ringling elephant killed her trainer in Gainesville, Florida. The elephant knocked down the 51-year-old trainer and stepped on his chest.

IMPEDING INVESTIGATIONS

August 24, 2004: The Associated Press reported that Ringling's parent company, Feld Entertainment, refused two recent subpoenas from the USDA, requiring Feld to provide a video of the October 3, 2003, tiger attack of Roy Horn to aid in the agency's investigation.

July 13, 2004: According to an affidavit by former Ringling lion handler Frank Hagan, employees who had knowledge of how a lion named Clyde died after traveling through the intense heat of the Mojave Desert in a poorly ventilated boxcar were instructed not to speak to USDA inspectors who were investigating the death. Ringling quickly had misters installed in the lions' boxcar before USDA officials arrived.

March 26, 2001: An internal USDA memo stated, "This is a request to subpoena to compel testimony and provide documentation ... under the AWA. ... I have been involved in an investigation into allegations of elephant abuse and exhibiting elephants infected with TB by Ringling Brothers Circus. ... The investigation has been very frustrating in that Feld Entertainment has not been cooperative with allowing the USDA to review medical records on the elephants, and the key witnesses will not cooperate due to court settlements with Feld Entertainment that prevent them from discussing any circus issues with anyone."

August 23, 1999: According to an incident report from the Humane Society of Santa Clara Valley, Ringling veterinarian Bill Lindsay and two other circus employees surrounded a humane investigator in a threatening manner and angrily confronted the investigator in an attempt to impede an investigation into bloody lacerations found on numerous elephants.

August 6, 1999: The USDA was forced to subpoena a necropsy report from Texas A&M University's veterinary laboratory for Benjamin, a 4-year-old elephant who drowned, after Ringling ignored AWA requirements and two investigators' July 28 requests for the documents.

February 25, 1999: According to internal USDA memos written by inspectors, detailing injuries found on two baby elephants during a February 9, 1999, inspection, "[Ringling veterinarian] Dr. Lindsay was very upset and asked repeatedly why we could not be more collegial and call him before we came. I explained to him that all our inspections are unannounced. ... All Ringling personnel were very reluctant to let us take pictures [of the calves' rope lesions]." Ringling personnel were described as "badgering," "disgusted," "antagonistic," and "defensive" toward the inspectors.

ELEPHANT TUBERCULOSIS

December 17, 2010: An e-mail to a Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency officer from Dr. Dennis Schmitt, Ringling's chair of veterinary care and director of research and conservation, revealed that an elephant named Karen, who was on the road with the circus, had tested positive for tuberculosis. According to the U.S. Animal Health Association, Karen is considered to be infected with the deadly disease, and she was subsequently denied entry into the state of Tennessee.

April 16, 2007: A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission captive wildlife inspection report noted that Ringling's breeding compound in Polk City, which housed 30 elephants, was still under a tuberculosis watch.

January 18, 2007: According to documents obtained from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Ringling veterinarian Dr. Ellen Wiedner called an official with the Florida Bureau of Animal Disease Control in an attempt to persuade the agency not to issue a state quarantine in order to avoid negative publicity after laboratory

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

tests confirmed the growth of tuberculosis on a lung sample from a deceased elephant who had been housed at Ringling's Williston, Florida, facility.

September 5, 2006: Two elephants at Ringling's Polk City, Florida, breeding facility tested positive for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, the human strain of tuberculosis that can pass from elephant to human, and three female elephants were pulled out of the traveling units because they had been exposed to at least one of the infected elephants.

September 22, 2005: A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission captive wildlife inspection report noted that four out of eight elephants (Siam, India, Tilly, and Prince) housed at Ringling's Williston facility tested positive for tuberculosis in 2001.

September 7, 2005: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to dispose of expired and undated tuberculosis drugs. The inspector also indicated that Ringling transported an elephant named Siam from the Williston facility to the breeding compound. Ringling's tuberculosis-infected elephants are kept at Williston. Siam tested positive for tuberculosis in 1999 (see April 16, 2001).

October 9, 2004: A 44-year-old Asian elephant named Roma was euthanized because of osteoarthritis.* A necropsy revealed that Roma had tuberculosis.

November 7, 2002: The USDA cited Ringling for failure to have four elephants tested for tuberculosis. The inspector wrote, "[Tuberculosis] is a disease that is dangerous to both man and animals. Animals must be tested in a timely manner for their protection as well as for their handlers."

August 30, 2001: According to an article on Salon.com titled, "The Greatest Vendetta on Earth," a 163-page sworn deposition given by Joel Kaplan, a private eye who had performed security and wire-tapping services for a Feld Entertainment subsidiary for 20 years, stated, "[Ringling] had some real problems with the elephants. ... I was told [by the circus veterinarian] ... that about half of the elephants in each of the shows had tuberculosis and that the tuberculosis was an easily transmitted disease to individuals, to human beings. ... I was asked by Chuck [Smith], through Kenneth [Feld], to find a physician who would test the people [in] the circus to see if they had tuberculosis but who would destroy the records and not turn them [in to] the Centers for Disease Control [and Prevention]."

April 16, 2001: An affidavit from a veterinarian at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories stated that Ringling elephants Tectchie, Vance, Sabu, Mala, Dolly, Calcutta 2, and Siam tested positive for tuberculosis.

September 6, 2000: The USDA cited Ringling for failing to provide veterinary care to an elephant named Tillie who has been diagnosed with tuberculosis. Tillie, who is owned by Patricia Zerbini, is under the care of Ringling's Williston facility and commingled with other elephants, which puts them at risk for infection or reinfection.

October 28, 1999: A 52-year-old Asian elephant named Teetchie was euthanized due to multiple joints affected by osteoarthritis* and an *M. tuberculosis* infection of the lung.

September 16, 1999: Ringling's Williston, Fla., facility was quarantined by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services because of elephants' having tuberculosis.

February 9, 1999: A USDA report indicated that tuberculosis tests for one elephant were not available for review and no treatment was instituted for another elephant with positive tuberculosis status.

DECLINING POPULARITY

January 17, 2011: *The Times-Tribune* of Corbin, Kentucky, reported that Ringling canceled one of its performances in the town because of low ticket sales.

January 12, 2009: Florida's Blood Centers pledged to stop offering free Ringling tickets to blood donors after its executives spoke with PETA.

January 8, 2009: D'Agostino, a New York grocery-store chain, ended its promotional partnership with Ringling after PETA contacted the company. The stores were distributing coupons for discounted Ringling tickets.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

November 17, 2008: Michigan-based home-repair company Hanson's Windows agreed to end its Ringling ticket giveaway after hearing from PETA.

July 29, 2008: Fitwize4Kids, a national healthy-lifestyle center for children, stopped participating in Ringling's Circus Fit program after PETA informed it of problems with Ringling's animal care.

March 15, 2008: The president of Harris Teeter, a Southeastern supermarket chain, confirmed in an e-mail to PETA that "[g]oing forward we will not be supporting Circus promotions [and] we already have turned one sponsorship down." The food giant had been promoting Ringling in some of its 200 stores.

August 1, 2008: In a report about the circus' Anaheim, Calif., performance, the *Highland Community News* wrote, "Surprisingly, the amazing acts with ... elephants and Bengal tigers did not receive as large a response from the audience as the seven motorcycle riders zooming around at the same time inside the 'Globe of Steel.'"

January 22, 2008: Lukoil Americas agreed not to hold any more promotional events with Ringling and vowed not to partner with or sponsor the circus at any of its more than 2,000 gas stations.

January 7, 2008: Denny's confirmed that it had ended its partnership with Ringling in December 2007, less than six months after announcing the joint promotions. The move came after months of PETA protests and consumer complaints.

December 8, 2006: Lucky Brand Jeans pulled T-shirts emblazoned with the Ringling Bros. logo off store shelves and the company's Web site after learning from PETA of the animal abuse associated with the circus and to ensure a pleasant shopping experience for compassionate consumers.

November 2, 2006: According to a news report on WJLA TV, the D.C. Armory, which had hosted Ringling in Washington, D.C., for 33 years, announced that the circus would no longer be performing at the venue. The report indicated that the Sports and Entertainment Commission, which operates the Armory, announced that it had been losing money on the show.

April 15, 2005: The *Philadelphia Daily News* reported, "The circus elephants are coming to town next week, bringing an outmoded and problematic form of entertainment to all Philadelphians. Here's hoping that this is the last year such an antiquated spectacle is welcomed within our city limits."

March 29, 2005: *The New York Times* reported, "They are still the ones cracking whips as Bengal tigers (beautiful but a little fat) walk in circles, occasionally roar and run in and out of cages that look too small for them. Their trainer, Taba, did not seem worthy of them. But our consciousness has changed. We worry about how the animals are trained and treated."

February 14, 2005: The *Star-Telegram* reported, "[I]n less than two decades, the Canadian entertainment phenomenon [animal-free Cirque du Soleil] has reached levels of revenues that it took Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey more than 100 years to attain."

November 20, 2004: The *Hamilton Spectator* (Ontario, Canada) reported, "[Production manager Brian Newman] said the circus has lost some of its appeal, which may account for fair ticket sales at each of this weekend's five shows at Cops Coliseum. Organizers say none of the shows at the modified 4,000-seat venue are sold out. ... [B]ehind the scenes, allegations of animal cruelty involving its elephants [has] plagued Ringling Bros. ... A *Spectator* reporter's request to view the elephants was declined."

November 5, 2004: The Chicago-area *Daily Herald* reported, "Less enthralling, at least to those of us who go to the circus every year, are those acts that seem to appear in every edition of the circus: the high-wire acts, the marching elephants, the motorcyclists that zoom around the inside of a metal sphere. ... Rating: 1/2 out of four stars."

March 5, 2004: MasterCard International dropped its controversial sponsorship of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. MasterCard joins Visa and Sears, Roebuck and Co. to become the third national sponsor to end its Ringling promotions amid a flood of complaints.

October 26, 2003: *The Capital-Journal* reported, "[T]he Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus, which hadn't been to Topeka in 12 years, had 'dismal numbers.'"

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

March 26, 2002: The *New York Daily News* reported, "I went to see the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at Madison Square Garden. ... The Garden was half full. ... The tigers moved with the half-speed of a Municipal Building bureaucrat and were more stoned than the bums you had to step over in Penn Station on the way into the Garden. ... [M]y little guy's favorite attraction was the giant industrial dung vacuum."

August 17, 2001: According to *The Wichita Eagle*, Ringling failed to secure a date at the Kansas Coliseum because of concerns about its declining circus attendance.

November 3, 2000: The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported, "Founded in 1871, the 'greatest show on earth' has steep competition these days from artier circuses, such as Cirque du Soleil, that rely more on theatrics than on lions and tigers and bears, oh my. This may explain why the east and west wings of the venue were empty."

September 19, 2000: *The Seattle Times* reported, "More than anything, I noticed how many seats were empty, how The Greatest Show on Earth was more of a no-show here in Seattle than anything else."

May 21, 2000: The *Dayton Daily News* reported, "But the most amazing thing of all wasn't even what was going on in the three rings [at Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus]. It was to be seen elsewhere in the arena, up in the seats. In all the empty seats. ... [T]he show we attended was nowhere close to sold out. In fact, the place was nearly empty."

November 19, 1999: The *Chicago Tribune* reported, "Last Thursday's performance of Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus at the 16,000-seat Allstate Arena was so small that two of the three rings were playing to rafts of empty seats. Attendees at several other first-week performances reported similarly small houses."

November 8, 1999: The *Chicago Sun-Times* reported, "As master of ceremonies, baby-faced Johnathan Lee Iverson was a congenial [Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus] ringmaster who didn't let on if the half-empty venue affected him."

September 17, 1999: *The Indianapolis News* reported, "Attendance continues to dwindle when Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus comes to town."

CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

April 19, 2005: According to the *Centre Daily*, Ringling animal trainer Sacha Houcke was charged with simple assault in University Park, Pennsylvania, after "two employees of the Bryce Jordan Center called police and reported witnessing Houcke choke his daughter, push her to the ground and punch her in the face while they were working with the circus horses." On May 25, 2005, Houcke entered a guilty plea to harassment and disorderly conduct citations and paid a \$300 fine.

March 6, 2005: According to the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Ringling animal handler Bryan Phipps was arrested for a 2001 aggravated bank robbery while the circus was performing in Cincinnati, Ohio. Phipps, who was hired by the circus in December 2001, spent six years in Ohio prisons in the 1990s after being convicted of drug trafficking, carrying a concealed weapon, aggravated robbery, and kidnapping. Police officials stated that several other agencies had warrants for his arrest, including a felony drug possession charge.

May 24, 2004: Thomas Allen Riccio, a Ringling circus clown performing under the name "Spanky," was arrested in Fayetteville, N.C., and charged with 10 counts of third-degree sexual exploitation of a minor. Authorities allegedly found 2,000 pictures on Riccio's computer, which was kept in his room on the circus train, of child pornography that depicted girls as young as 5 years old engaged in sexual activity with adults.

May 2, 2003: According to a report on CBS program *60 Minutes*, suburban soccer mom and freelance journalist Jan Pottker filed a lawsuit against Ringling for fraud and conspiracy. Pottker charged that Ringling spent an estimated \$3 million over an eight-year period in an attempt to sabotage her writing career after she wrote an unflattering article about the circus.

September 26, 2002: According to *The Salt Lake Tribune*, a Ringling acrobat was arrested and jailed in Idaho on charges of sexual battery against a 16-year-old girl. The acrobat allegedly dragged the victim back into his sleeping

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA 23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • RinglingBeatsAnimals.com**

PETA Factsheet

quarters, slammed the door, and assaulted her. The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service also ordered the acrobat to be held.

November 10, 2000: A Ringling employee was arrested in Rosemont, Illinois, after police identified him from a fingerprint left behind when he allegedly mugged an Ohio woman at knifepoint a month earlier. The circus worker, who had been convicted of aggravated burglary and drug abuse in 1989, was suspected of committing a string of recent armed muggings.

November 21, 1998: The *Calgary Herald* reported that the goat Ringling featured in 1980 as a “unicorn” was purchased from serial killer Leonard Thomas Lake. Lake abducted, tortured, raped, and murdered women before committing suicide when he was finally arrested in 1985. The “unicorn” was actually a mutilated goat whose horns had been manipulated to grow in the center of the animal’s forehead.

March 17, 1998: The *Mountain Xpress* reported that a Ringling employee, who was on parole after serving seven years on a New York murder conviction, was arrested in connection with two break-ins and liquor theft at an Asheville, North Carolina, liquor store.

April 13, 1997: A Ringling employee was arrested in Worcester, Massachusetts, on a fugitive-from-justice warrant, which listed a charge of counterfeiting.

November 19, 1994: Ringling’s vice president of animal care Gunther Gebel-Williams, was arrested in St. Louis and charged with disturbing the peace. Gebel-Williams had screamed at a police officer and threatened the officer with the whip that he uses on his tigers because officers were giving traffic tickets to circus customers.

October 19, 1994: A Ringling employee in Boston, Massachusetts, was arrested and charged with assault and battery with a dangerous weapon when he stabbed a horse trainer in the stomach with a penknife. A fight had broken out when the employee had tried to get the horses to kick the trainer.

April 19, 1994: A railroad official testified that a circus-train brake operator who helped conduct a safety inspection just before a deadly Ringling train derailment had failed a drug test after the wreck. A clown and an elephant trainer were killed in the crash.

January 17, 1994: Two Ringling performers were arrested in Post Orange, Florida, and charged with disorderly intoxication. One of the men was also charged with resisting arrest with violence after he swung at the arresting officer and tried to push the patrol car into the officer.

*Captivity-induced foot problems and arthritis are the leading reasons for the euthanasia of captive elephants.