



PETA Factsheet

George Carden Circus International

USDA License #43-C-0025, 3901 W. State Hwy. O, Springfield, MO 65803

George Carden Circus has failed to meet minimal federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has cited George Carden Circus numerous times for failing to provide shelter from the elements, for inadequate and unsafe enclosures, for failing to provide proper veterinary care, and for failure to properly handle animals. Contact PETA for documentation.

March 17, 2011: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for a direct violation of the AWA for failure to establish and maintain a program of adequate veterinary care after failing to use “appropriate methods to assess and treat the stiffness and gait issues” of three elephants. The inspector questioned the fitness of the elephants to be on the road, saying that failure to diagnose and treat the animals “could affect the long term health and wellbeing of these elephants.”

March 16, 2011: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for a direct violation of the AWA for failing to ensure that elephants being used for elephant rides remained under the control of handlers. The inspector wrote that there were too few handlers, that the handlers who were present were distracted, and that the elephants were seen walking around the rink while not under the control of a handler.

March 5, 2009: According to an article in *The News-Dispatch*, four employees of the George Carden Circus were arrested for public intoxication following a fight at a bar in La Porte, Indiana.

November 19, 2007: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to an elephant who had a lesion on a toenail, which a circus representative said was the result of a ruptured abscess. There was no documentation that the injury had been treated.

October 13, 2007: The circus refused to allow a veterinarian, two inspectors, and the operations manager with the City of Chicago Animal Care and Control Center to perform an inspection of the elephants during the circus's appearance at the UIC Pavilion. A circus representative said, “We're not going to let you in.”

April 29, 2006: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to have dangerous animals under the direct control and supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced animal handler. The inspector wrote, “Only one animal handler was available to manage two elephants providing rides to the public. There were times when both elephants were loaded with [members of the] public and the handler was not in the ring with the animals and could not have been in control of either elephant. No other knowledgeable and experienced elephant handler was available to assist this handler during public exhibition.”

March 16, 2006: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failing to provide veterinary care to an elephant named Judy who had three open wounds on her forehead and one open wound on her left front leg.

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August 17, 2005: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to comply with veterinary care requirements by not consulting with a veterinarian about an irritated patch of skin on an elephant.

October 12, 2004: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to have written documentation to show that foot care was being provided for an Asian elephant named Duchess who had a long crack in a toenail on a hind foot. According to *The Elephant's Foot*, foot-related conditions and arthritis are the leading causes of euthanasia in captive elephants in the United States. Cracked nails can lead to foot disorders that may result in serious disability or death.

August 29, 2004: An elephant with the George Carden Circus attacked an arena worker following a performance at the El Maida Shrine Circus in El Paso, Texas. The elephant knocked the man down, threw him against a wall, and pinned him against a fence. He sustained a dislocated shoulder, a torn rotator cuff, and a nerve injury, which required surgery for repair and reconstruction and resulted in more than \$15,000 in medical bills.

February 25, 2004: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to comply with its written program of veterinary care, including routine tests for parasites as prescribed by the attending veterinarian, and inadequate recordkeeping.

July 10, 2003: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to provide adequate foot care for an elephant named Janice. The inspector wrote, "Failure to provide the appropriate foot care to this elephant may cause further deterioration of the cuticles and may result in pain and discomfort to the animal." The USDA also cited the circus for failure to provide an adequate barrier to ensure the safety of the animals and the public and noted that tuberculosis testing for the elephants was not being conducted in accordance with the program of veterinary care.

June 17, 2002: Two elephants, named Tory and Mary, performing with the Shrine Circus in Menomonie, Wis., bolted out of a circus tent during a show, scattering crowds. Mary hiked 2 miles through town and was recaptured at the University of Wisconsin-Stout campus when trucks blocked her escape. One child was injured, and the elephants damaged a door at the park and caused \$600 in damage to a city truck. The Shriners had contracted with George Carden Circus for the event.

May 1, 2001: According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., two George Carden Circus employees pleaded guilty to cruelty to animals charges in provincial court in St. John's, Newfoundland, and each was fined \$200. The charges were brought after investigators found that the bears were 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.

April 4, 2001: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to provide minimum space to a llama who was unable to stand with his head in an upright position, improper food storage, failure to have an exercise plan for its dogs, and inadequate recordkeeping.

August 1, 2000: Each of two George Carden Circus employees was charged by the SPCA with five counts of cruelty to animals in Newfoundland, Canada. The alleged offenses include causing unnecessary pain and suffering to five bears, eight ponies, and three elephants and failure to provide water and care for the elephants.

July 23, 2000: According to *The Daily News*, the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources forced George Carden Circus to leave the province and levied a fine because the circus had brought bears in violation of an ordinance prohibiting bears in circuses. The circus was forced to cancel 10 remaining performance dates and was also fined for failure to have a wildlife import permit.

June 26-27, 2000: A Canadian SPCA investigator found eight ponies and three elephants confined to a poorly ventilated trailer for more than seven hours without water. A chain around the leg of one of the elephants lacked sufficient padding to prevent injury. Inadequate space "forced one elephant to take an unnatural posture." The elephants exhibited "extreme signs of abnormal and stressed behavior" prior to loading. Five bears were confined in very small cages for 23 hours per day without water or bedding. The bears' food was contaminated with fecal material. One bear exhibited signs of "abnormal and stressed behavior."

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June 16, 2000: According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the Stephenville, Newfoundland, fire department's chief stated it was unlikely that the agency would bring the George Carden Circus back again because of controversy over the treatment of animals.

June 13, 2000: According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., representatives of the provincial diabetes association in Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland, instructed George Carden Circus to remove the organization's name from advertising posters because it was not endorsing the circus.

June 12, 2000: According to the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., the St. John's, Newfoundland, City Council voted not to give a license to the George Carden Circus for a June 23-24 booking at Memorial Stadium after viewing video footage of how animals in circuses are trained. The city later put into effect a policy that it will not issue a license to any circus that features exotic or wild animals.

July 25, 1998: A USDA veterinarian wrote regarding treatment of the tigers, "Handling of all animals should be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma, overheating, excessive cooling, behavior stress, physical harm, or unnecessary discomfort. Physical abuse shall not be used to train, work, or otherwise handle animals ... [the groom] picked up a prod and began forcefully and repeatedly poking the animal through the cage bars. ... The animal was again subjected to another session of abusive prodding by Mr. Skinner. This unprofessional and abusive behavior on the part of the groom is unacceptable."

April 22, 1998: The George Carden Circus was in noncompliance with the AWA for failing to have a plan of veterinary care, records of its animals, and records of acquisition, disposition, and transport.

March 26, 1998: A USDA inspection revealed that the George Carden Circus was noncompliant with the AWA for veterinary care.

June 20, 1997: W.H. Chisholm, D.V.M., observed the following while the George Carden Circus was in Nova Scotia, Canada: "After unloading the three elephants from the trailer, the trainer was in the process of cleaning them when he ordered one of them (Janice) to stay in place. When she did not comply, he used his ankus (a pole with a pointed end and a hook on its side) to grab her inside the mouth and firmly jerk her face toward him as he hollered at her to obey. Next, he ordered her to lie down, at which point she began to urinate (a common stress response in animals). He continued to order her to lie down and roll over on her side in her own urine as she was still in the process of urinating. After he finished hosing her off, he ordered her to get up. Again, she did not comply to his satisfaction, and he subsequently kicked her in the face with force equivalent to what I would use to kick a soccer ball. When the elephants were performing in the ring, I observed the trainer repeatedly driving the pointed end of the ankus into the tissue above the foot of one of the elephants' left hind legs. He continued for eight to 10 times. ... This was done with both hands on the shaft of the ankus and his full body force thrown into the movement. I witnessed the tiger trainer use his black whip on at least six occasions to hit the tigers in the face when they were not performing appropriately in the ring."

January 4, 1997: According to an internal USDA document, animals owned by George Carden Circus might have been exposed to Hawthorn Corporation elephants who tested positive for tuberculosis.

October 16, 1996: A USDA inspection report cited George Carden Circus for tiger enclosures in need of repair and failure to provide veterinary care for the elephants and goats. The inspector stated, "One female pygmy goat has large swelling on lower neck and needs a vet examine. Cindy, one elephant, has a history of weight loss. No vet records are present to document treatment that has been done."

May 23, 1996: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failure to have an updated program of veterinary care.

April 25, 1996: The USDA cited George Carden Circus for failing to comply with handling regulations.

March 21, 1995: A USDA inspection found the George Carden Circus was noncompliant because chemicals were stored with the tiger and elephant food, tigers were fed spoiled meat not fit for consumption, veterinary care was inadequate, and elephants were in need of foot care.

October 6, 1994: A USDA inspection found that George Carden Circus was using unsafe enclosures for the animals. The USDA inspector stated, "[N]ails are protruding from the top of enclosures housing dogs."

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March 17, 1994: A USDA inspection found George Carden Circus noncompliant with the AWA for failure to provide safe travel trailers for the animals. The USDA inspector reported that the travel trailers had breaking, rusted metal on the floor that could injure the elephants. The circus was also noncompliant for lack of veterinary care. The USDA inspector stated, "Sheep in petting pen have excessively long hooves that cause animals to walk/stand abnormally."

March 17, 1993: A USDA inspector reported, "[D]ogs are in direct sun ... without access to shade or shelter."

July 3, 1991: An inspection was completed by Dr. Ken Langelier with the SPCA in Canada. The following was observed by Dr. Langelier: "The bears performed a bicycle-riding act and were led on leashes and wore muzzles. The only exercise was on a leash for performance. The bears urinated and defecated in their cages. No toys or other materials for psychological stimulation were provided to any of the bears. All elephants were in chains in full sun with no water available. The trainer was not available, but the stallions were kept in almost full sun, and food and water were not available. For 'working animals,' it is unfortunate they do not earn the right to larger holding facilities, psychological stimulation such as toys, exercise, and easier work schedule with less frequent transportation. The economics of circuses will never provide this, so it is unfortunate that these animals must continue to entertain people while remaining in sub-optimal condition."