

# Kelly Miller Circus

P.O. Box 829, Hugo, OK 74743

**Kelly Miller Circus has failed to meet minimum 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 Kelly Miller Circus for failing to handle animals in a manner that is safe for the animals and the public, failing to provide veterinary records, and failing to provide structurally sound enclosures. Kelly Miller Circus has leased animals from other exhibitors, including Carson & Barnes Circus. In 2017, Kelly Miller Circus relinquished its AWA license and owner John Ringling North II put the circus up for sale. New owner Jim Judkins claims that it will no longer use exotic animals. Contact PETA for documentation.**

**July 2017:** A visitor to Kelly Miller Circus in Clinton, Indiana, filmed a pony named Miley tethered to a "living carousel." She had excessively long hooves and was constantly moving around in apparent discomfort. Authorities in Independence, Kentucky, ordered the circus to stop using her after finding that she had a very painful and advanced form of laminitis known as "founder," which occurs when there's chronic inflammation of the tissue between the bone and the hoof wall.

**April 15, 2015:** During a Kelly Miller Circus performance, a USDA inspector saw an electric cattle prod used on the zebras and camels. The USDA cited Carolyn Rice, the zebra and camel act provider, with failing to handle animals properly and stated that the "[u]se of an electronic cattle prod for zebras and camels is not an accepted handling method and can cause the animals unnecessary discomfort and behavioral stress."

**January 15, 2014:** Kelly Miller Circus' contracted tiger exhibitor, Ryan Easley, was cited for failing to have proper drainage in a building housing six tigers. There was standing water on the floor, and there wasn't any way for water or fecal matter to drain out of the building. In addition, Easley was cited because the enclosure had only one opening to the outside, which could fit only one tiger at a time, possibly leading to aggressive behavior. Finally, only two water receptacles were available for all six tigers.

**May 3, 2012:** The USDA cited a tiger exhibitor traveling with Kelly Miller Circus, Ryan Easley, for

failing to contact a veterinarian when two of his tigers sustained injuries.

**November 22, 2011:** Kelly Miller Circus' contracted tiger exhibitor, Ryan Easley, was cited for failing to maintain high-enough containing walls around an animal exercise area. He was also cited for failing to meet minimum space requirements for animals in transport.

**October 7, 2011:** The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for improper handling of elephants as they were giving rides while traveling with Kelly Miller Circus. During the inspection, the only elephant handler controlling elephants during rides was observed handing money to another employee while the elephant walked away with the passengers. At another time, one handler was seen handling two elephants. One elephant with passengers walked ahead while the handler loaded a second elephant. The first elephant stopped at a curtain exit with no physical barrier to stop her.

**July 21, 2011:** The USDA cited the tiger exhibitor traveling with Kelly Miller Circus, Natalie Cainan, for violating the AWA after three tigers escaped from their transport enclosures and one bit a horse. It took approximately 30 minutes to contain the tigers safely. This escape posed a threat to the tigers, the public, and other animals.

**June 16, 2007:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for including a poodle owned by an unlicensed exhibitor in its show.

**October 20, 2005:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to provide elephants Libby and Nina with veterinary care. Libby had a red, inflamed, and oozing puncture wound that pierced her ear. Nina had a long, deep crack in her toenail, and her toenails hadn't been trimmed in a while.

**March 13, 2002:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to maintain enclosures in a manner that would protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals.

**October 4, 2001:** Eduardo Steeples, a chimpanzee exhibitor used by Kelly Miller Circus was cited by the USDA for inadequate ventilation, failing to provide minimum space for the chimpanzee stored in a cage that measured only 5 feet by 4 feet by 6 feet, improper social grouping, failing to provide environment enrichment for a chimpanzee kept in solitary confinement, and failing to protect four bears from temperature extremes. The inspector wrote, "The temperature in Billy Joe's [chimpanzee's] enclosure ... was 95 degrees with 65 percent humidity levels. ... [Billy Joe] is singly housed and cannot see

or hear another nonhuman primate. ... This is not in accordance with currently accepted professional standards. ... The cage was barren except for a basketball. ... One of the bears was observed panting during the inspection. The temperature in the enclosure ... was recorded at 95 degrees, with humidity levels of 63 percent. Within several minutes of entering the enclosure, I began perspiring and felt discomfort." The inspector noted that foods necessary to provide the bears with a nutritionally complete diet were not available.

**August 8, 2001:** Three bears used in the Kelly Miller Circus during its 2000 tour were found malnourished by a deputy in a trailer near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. The bears were severely emaciated and dehydrated with bloody paws from pacing across fiberglass flooring. The trainer, Aleksandr Shelkovnikov, was charged with one felony count of cruelty to animals. Several misdemeanor charges were also filed against him, including possession of wildlife with intent to transport out of state and possession of a brown bear without a wildlife breeder's license.

**April 13, 2001:** A circusgoer filed a complaint with the Mountain Home, Arkansas, police department after seeing the Kelly Miller Circus elephant handler strike an elephant. According to the police report, an eyewitness gave this account: "I was standing at the elephant's side at the Shrine Circus, talking to the handler. The animal was obeying all that he was told. It looked to me like the elephant sneezed. The handler turned around and struck the elephant so hard, it drew blood; [the elephant] let out a sad sound and backed up. It shocked me to see the man treat such an animal with such cruelty."

**June 2000:** The Baltimore County Fire Department refused to issue a permit to Kelly Miller Circus because its tent failed to meet state and county inflammability requirements. The circus was forced to cancel performances in Reisterstown, Maryland.

**January 5, 2000:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to maintain transport trailers in a manner that protects the animals from injury.

**April 17, 1998:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to handle animals in a manner that is safe for both the animals and the general public.

**October 9, 1997:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to have a plan for veterinary care.

**September 1997:** In Naperville, Illinois, 460 signatures were sent to the Naper Settlement, a sponsor of the Kelly Miller Circus, asking that it stop supporting the circus because of the mistreatment of

the animals. An investigator with Illinois Animal Action witnessed a handler strike an elephant 25 times during a 30-minute period while the animal was giving rides to the public.

**January 4, 1997:** According to an internal USDA document, an elephant named Libby, who is owned by Carson & Barnes Circus, was exposed to Hawthorn Corporation elephants who died of tuberculosis and others who tested positive for tuberculosis. Kelly Miller Circus leased Libby from Carson & Barnes Circus.

**March 1996:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for failing to provide structurally sound enclosures for the animals.

**May 1994:** According to an article in the *Dayton Daily News*, a woman saw a Kelly Miller Circus trainer strike an elephant in the face with a rod.

**September 1992:** The USDA cited Kelly Miller Circus for not having any records of veterinary care.