

December 3, 2015

Sgt. Kim Wolsiffer  
 Deputy Chief of Enforcement Operations  
 Animal Care and Control Division  
 City of Indianapolis

**Via e-mail**

Re: Urgent Request to Bar Lame Elephants From Ringling Performances

Dear Sgt. Wolsiffer,

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that your office immediately inspect the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus and ensure that no lame or injured elephant is forced to perform. The circus is scheduled to perform at the Bankers Life Fieldhouse **from today** until December 6.

PETA just received footage recorded last week in Chicago that shows elephants Assan and Mable exhibiting signs of lameness. In [Video 1](#), as Mable walks first in line, she appears to be lame in her left rear limb. Assan enters the arena at 1:25 and is clearly stiff and slow in her gait. This is evidenced further in [Video 2](#) at 0:48 as she leaves the arena and in footage recorded on October 16 in St. Louis, where she showed signs of leg stiffness (*see* [Video 3](#) at 0:23). Elephant expert Dr. Philip K. Ensley reviewed the footage and opined that Assan "undoubtedly suffers from chronic long-standing arthritis and degenerative joint disease, thus her slow, meticulous, and painful gait." He further [observed](#) that both elephants were suffering from potentially painful toenail lesions in June and October of this year.

PETA is especially concerned about Assan, as her painful condition is long-standing yet apparently ignored by the circus. The attached inspection report from July 22 noted that she appeared to be "stiff in the front legs exiting from the train car." Ringling's own veterinarian admitted during that inspection that Assan has "circulatory issues" caused by Ringling's transport conditions and that her age was a factor. Likewise, in 2013, a leading elephant expert noted that Assan was "clinically lame to the point of being crippled," and in 2011, he observed that "[h]er gait is stilted and laborious, indicating pain. ... She is lame and has arthritis, she is in pain, and in my professional opinion she should not be performing." (Statements are attached.)

Foot problems and arthritis are the leading reasons why captive elephants are euthanized and are aggravated by the very conditions to which Ringling has subjected these elephants for decades, including the stress and confinement of being on the road, prolonged chaining, unhygienic conditions, and being forced to perform physically challenging circus tricks.

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PETA FOUNDATION IS AN  
 OPERATING NAME OF FOUNDATION  
 TO SUPPORT ANIMAL PROTECTION.

AFFILIATES:

- PETA U.S.
- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)

Please inspect all Ringling's elephants and ensure that no lame or injured animal is forced to perform in violation of Indianapolis Revised Code § 531-40(a)(3) and (4), which state that animals shall be "protected against abuse, cruelty, neglect, torment, **overload, overwork**, or any other mistreatment," and must receive "proper care" if "diseased or injured, or exhibiting symptoms of disease" (emphasis added).

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rachel Mathews", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rachel Mathews

Counsel | Captive Animal Law Enforcement

Attachments