

December 3, 2015

Elizabeth Goldentyer, D.V.M.
Director, Animal Welfare Operations
USDA/APHIS/AC Eastern Region

Via e-mail: aceast@aphis.usda.gov

Dear Dr. Goldentyer,

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) immediately inspect the Red Unit of Feld Entertainment, Inc., dba "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus" ("Ringling"; license no. 52-C-0137), for apparent violations of the Animal Welfare Act (AWA) and ensure that no lame elephant is forced to perform.

At a Ringling performance *just last week* on November 25 in Chicago, elephants Assan and Mable showed 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 from October 16 in St. Louis, where she showed signs of leg stiffness (*see* [Video 3](#) at 0:23). Elephant expert Dr. Philip K. Ensley opined that Assan "undoubtedly suffers from chronic long-standing arthritis and degenerative joint disease, thus her slow, meticulous, and painful gait." As you surely know from PETA's previous correspondence, this is a long-standing concern, yet Ringling is continuing to force lame elephants to perform in apparent violation of the AWA (*see* recent complaints AC15-530 and AC15-599 for greater detail).

Forcing elephants who show signs of pain and stiffness to perform plainly violates 9 C.F.R. §§ 2.131(b)(1) and (d)(1), which require that animals should be handled "in a manner that does not cause ... unnecessary discomfort" and may only be exhibited "under conditions consistent with their good health and well-being."

Please promptly inspect the elephants, along with their veterinary records, and ensure that they're receiving adequate veterinary care in accordance with the mandates of 9 C.F.R. § 2.40 and that *no injured or lame animal is forced to perform*. I urge you to hold Ringling accountable for any and all violations of the AWA that you uncover.

Ringling's Red Unit is scheduled to perform at the Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis **from today** until December 6. Thank you for your attention to this important issue. Please inform me of the complaint number that your agency assigns to this correspondence.

Very truly yours,



Rachel Mathews
Counsel | Captive Animal Law Enforcement

cc: Dr. Denise Sofranko, Field Specialist for Elephants

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