

April 29, 2016

Robert Gibbens, D.V.M.
Director, Animal Welfare Operations
USDA/APHIS/AC Western Region

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

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

Dear Dr. Gibbens and Dr. Goldentyer,

I am writing on behalf of PETA to request that the U.S. Department of Agriculture promptly investigate apparent violations of the Animal Welfare Act by Carson & Barnes Circus (73-C-0001), whose employee Habib Omar was exhibiting elephants Bunnie and Libby with a Shrine circus.

A witness attended the Aleppo Shrine Circus in Wilmington, Massachusetts, on April 20 and documented that an elephant, believed to be Bunnie, exhibited lameness. In Video 1 at 2:05–2:10, the elephant on the left appears stiff while walking, especially in her right foreleg, which she swings out in a peg-leg motion. Her stiffness is further evidenced while she walks at 2:47.

The witness also documented that both elephants had toenail trauma, vertical cracks, and discoloration (*see* Video). Damaged, unhealthy toenails can be painful, are caused and exacerbated by prolonged confinement on inappropriate and hard surfaces, and can lead to foot disorders that may result in serious disability or death in elephants. Continuing to allow Carson & Barnes to travel with these elephants and use them for rides and performances puts their health and well-being at risk.

Forcing lame or injured elephants to perform plainly violates 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(b)(1) and (d)(1), which state that "[h]andling of all animals shall be done as expeditiously and carefully as possible in a manner that does not cause trauma ... or unnecessary discomfort" and that "[a]nimals shall be exhibited only for periods of time and under conditions consistent with their good health and well-being."

Please promptly inspect these 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. **Also, bar any injured or suffering animal from performing** and hold Carson & Barnes accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please inform me of the complaint number that your agency assigns to this correspondence.

Very truly yours,

Lewis Crary | Captive Wildlife Specialist
Captive Animal Law Enforcement, PETA Foundation

cc: Dr. Denise Sofranko, Field Specialist for Elephants

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