

Leilani Münter

August 8, 2014

Doug Dock, General Manager
Sandusky Speedway Motorsports Park

Will Patterson, Race Director
Sandusky Speedway Motorsports Park

Dear Mr. Dock and Mr. Patterson:

As a professional racecar driver and lover of racing, I am disappointed to hear from the folks at PETA that you are planning to host [Carson & Barnes Circus](#) at your speedway. This circus is notorious for its mistreatment and exploitation of animals, and as a racing professional, I don't want our sport associated with such cruelty.

You and I both know that tigers don't naturally jump through rings of fire, elephants don't stand on balls or balance on their heads, and bears don't ride bikes. So why do they behave this way in the circus? It's not because they are offered praise or treats in return. It's because they are violently beaten into submission. They perform confusing and unnatural tricks out of fear of what's to come if they don't. This [undercover video](#) of a Carson & Barnes training session forever changed my understanding of how animals are used in circuses. It shows the cruel antics of elephant trainer Tim Frisco—who still works for Carson & Barnes—as he trains elephant handlers on how to use [bullhooks](#) and electric prods to make the animals perform. "Sink that hook into 'em," he says. "When you hear that screaming, then you know you got their attention. . . . Make 'em scream." Bears and elephants are seen nervously pacing and bobbing their heads, both of which are signs of severe psychological stress, according to animal behavior experts. They are confined to cages that are far too small or chained so tightly that they are barely able to move, and they are denied basic necessities, such as the opportunity to exercise, socialize, and play.

Carson & Barnes has racked up more than 100 citations for violating the Animal Welfare Act by mistreating animals and endangering the public. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cited the circus just this past April for failure to have a handler present as a man and his son approached from behind to take photos. Violations like this put the public at [great risk](#)—on average, one person is killed by an elephant every year in the U.S., and many more are injured. The USDA also cited Carson & Barnes in December for failing to provide a llama who had an eye condition and a thin body with adequate veterinary care. These animals are dragged around the country in trailers with very poor ventilation. They are mistreated, overworked to the point of exhaustion, and, all too often, neglected and denied access to veterinary care for injuries inflicted by handlers or sustained as a result of the grueling circus life that they are forced to endure—all so that we can be "entertained."

I am asking that you immediately cancel the Carson & Barnes performance scheduled for August 12th and that you join me in pledging never to promote this circus or any other animal act in the future. At the very least, please make this year the last time that you ever host an animal act. I support your speedway and appreciate your love of racing, but I can't support your decision to promote abuse and neglect.

Sincerely,



Leilani Münter