

September 5, 2017

Francis J. Mason
 Illustrious Potentate
 Aleppo Shrine

Dear Mr. Mason,

I'm writing on behalf of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals with urgent new information about animal deaths and suffering at the [Hawthorn Corporation](#), which supplied the tiger act for the Royal Hanneford Circus. This circus, sponsored by your shrine, performed last April at Aleppo Shriners Auditorium. I urge you to commit to supporting only animal-free entertainment moving forward.


Recent U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspections revealed that two tigers exhibited by Hawthorn died in just over a month and that another had serious health problems earlier this year. Between April and May, the company was cited for confining tigers to cramped cages without sufficient space for exercise and for failing to provide an emaciated tiger named King—who was not eating and couldn't lift his tail to urinate—with veterinary care. The inspector noted, "The vertebrae along his back and rib cage was visible and he walked with a hunched posture. His hips were pronounced with a sunken appearance on both sides of the flank." While on the road, a tiger named Prince became hypothermic. By the time he was taken to a veterinarian, he was recumbent and dehydrated and had difficulty breathing. Ultimately, he had to be euthanized. Also while on the road, a tiger named Munia died when trainers were "unable" to contact a veterinarian, and Hawthorn refused to allow a necropsy after her death.

This notorious exhibitor [made headlines in April](#) when a truck transporting tigers from the Hejaz Shrine Circus in South Carolina to Illinois got a flat tire and the driver parked it in a strip-mall parking lot in Frankfort, Kentucky, before reportedly checking himself into a motel. The tigers, unattended inside small cages, ran out of water. Eventually, city employees arrived to give the tigers water and authorities from the Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources cited the driver for not having the proper permit to transport tigers through the state.

Hawthorn has been [under fire from the USDA](#) for years. It has accumulated \$272,500 in penalties from the agency and has had its license suspended twice. The USDA [confiscated](#) an elephant named Delhi from the company after it forced her to stand in undiluted formaldehyde and failed to treat her resulting chemical burns and swelling. Later, it required the company to surrender all elephants in its care. Dozens of tigers have died on Hawthorn's watch, including numerous juveniles, and the death toll is apparently continuing to rise.

This is the kind of suffering and abuse that your Shrine club is supporting by continuing to host circuses that use animals. Please don't be complicit in this abuse any longer and promote only animal-free circuses moving forward.

Very truly yours,



Rachel Mathews, Esq.

Associate Director | Captive Animal Law Enforcement

PEOPLE FOR
 THE ETHICAL
 TREATMENT
 OF ANIMALS
 FOUNDATION

Washington, D.C.
 1536 16th St. N.W.
 Washington, DC 20036
 202-483-PETA

Los Angeles
 2154 W. Sunset Blvd.
 Los Angeles, CA 90026
 323-644-PETA

Norfolk
 501 Front St.
 Norfolk, VA 23510
 757-622-PETA

Oakland
 554 Grand Ave.
 Oakland, CA 94610
 510-763-PETA

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