

International Elephant Aid

One World...One Elephant at a Time

September 12, 2010

Kevin Johnson, Mayor
Gus Vina, Interim City Manager
915 I St., 5th Flr.
Sacramento, CA 95814
One page via fax to: (916) 264-7680 and (916) 808-7618

Dear Mayor Johnson and Mr. Vina,

As an elephant caregiver with over 35 years experience training, managing and caring for dozens of captive elephants in circus, zoo, and sanctuary environments, I feel obligated to report on what I observed this past week in Sacramento in hopes that the City of Sacramento will vigorously enforce its ordinance intended to provide humane care to animals in traveling shows.

I was present as six Asian elephants from Ringling Brothers circus were paraded down Sacramento city streets to the Arco building; a walk of slightly more than 2.5 miles. During the walk I observed three elephants with irregular gates, limb stiffness, fear response and what appeared to be painful feet.

An older, overweight elephant shuffled her feet uncharacteristically along the ground. On numerous occasions her back right leg buckled under her weight. Both back foot pads showed signs of uneven wear. The last elephant in line had difficulty keeping pace with the others. She walked stiffly on her front legs and had an uneven gate. She winced her eye in apparent pain with nearly each stride of her right front leg.

Forcing any of these afflicted elephants to perform physically exertive behaviors such as the hind leg stand, long mount, sit up or spindle turn, would put undue pressure on problem areas of their body, resulting in pain. Many of the elephants I cared for at the sanctuary suffered from permanent disability as a result of circus life, including years of performing tricks that put extraordinary strain on muscles and joints.

An elephant named Sarah was yelled at excessively by trainers for the duration of the walk. She was wide eyed, held her head high and was jumpy. The tail holding behavior that she refused to do is used to deter a skittish elephant from running away. The trainer embedded a bullhook under her chin nearly the entire walk. In my professional opinion, this elephant poses a danger to the public and has been conditioned through dominance-style training to be fearful and on edge.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide my observations. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions or need clarification.

Sincerely,



Carol Buckley
Founder
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