



August 31, 2017

Howard Lyle, President  
Hardin County Agricultural Society

Dear Mr. Lyle,

I'm writing again on behalf of PETA with urgent information about The Great Bear Show, which is scheduled to appear at the Hardin County Fair. I urge you to ensure that the fair goes forward without this exhibitor.

The show's operator, Bob Steele, has a disturbing history of violating federal Animal Welfare Act regulations, including in the [latest publicly available inspection report](#). Based on documentation gathered at a recent appearance, the most serious violations appear to be ongoing, so PETA is alerting the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Steele has been cited by the USDA *three times* for not providing a young bear named Barney with adequate veterinary care after he was observed to have large patches of hair loss around his neck and face and halfway down the sides of his body. The inspector noted that the bear was scratching himself in the areas of the hair loss and that his chronic condition had been present since at least November 2014. While bears in the wild are active for up to 18 hours per day, spending their time exploring diverse terrain, Barney has been confined to a travel trailer, possibly for more than a month and likely without any exercise.

Steele was also cited this year after it was determined that there were no visual barriers in the enclosure to allow the animals to avoid each other or get out of view of the guests. In addition, there were no furnishings, water tubs, straw, or bedding that would allow the animals to express normal postural or social adjustments. During this inspection, both Barney and another bear, named Cindi, were observed pacing, likely because they didn't have any opportunity to engage in innate natural behavior. The inspector noted that pacing "is an abnormal behavior pattern and can indicate stress, frustration or an underlying medical condition." According to bear expert Jay Pratte, who has more than 25 years of experience in captive-bear husbandry, "[T]hese bears are enduring poor husbandry and care and neglect of their basic biological needs and considerations, and their constant exploitation for public presentations and sales of merchandise is a form of abuse."

The USDA has cited Steele multiple times for handling bears in a manner that doesn't ensure their safety or that of the viewing public. He allows members of the public—including young children—to have their photographs taken with the bears and uses only a [thin Plexiglas barrier](#) and a leash attached to a chain around the animals' necks to separate them from visitors who are photographed.

Because it appears that you don't intend to cancel the bear act, I'm left with no option but to alert our members and supporters that Hardin County Fair apparently doesn't share their concerns regarding animal welfare and isn't interested in addressing the cruelty inflicted on bears used for entertainment.

Please prioritize animal welfare and public safety by canceling Steele's cruel bear show and allowing only wild animal-free entertainment moving forward.

Very truly yours,

*Melanie Johnson*

Melanie Johnson  
Campaign Coordinator, Animals in Entertainment  
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

PEOPLE FOR  
THE ETHICAL  
TREATMENT  
OF ANIMALS

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

Info@peta.org  
PETA.org

Affiliates:

- PETA Asia
- PETA India
- PETA France
- PETA Australia
- PETA Germany
- PETA Netherlands
- PETA Foundation (U.K.)