



March 9, 2017

Rich Hartzell  
Director  
Spokane County Fair & Expo Center

Dear Mr. Hartzell,

I'm writing again on behalf of PETA to urge you to cancel The Great Bear Show, which is scheduled to perform at the Spokane County Fair & Expo Center next week, and to share a copy of our recently filed [complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) concerning this show. It contains allegations relating to concerns about animal and public safety following PETA's consultation with a bear expert who evaluated video footage and photographs of the show's recent appearance in Billings, Montana.

The show's exhibitor, Bob Steele, has a disturbing history of violating the federal Animal Welfare Act and has been cited by the USDA repeatedly for the improper handling of bears he forces to perform—thereby exposing the public to great risks and the animals to harm. He was cited *twice* for not providing a bear named Barney with adequate veterinary care after the animal was observed to have large patches of hair loss around his neck and face and down the sides of his body. He has frequently been seen scratching himself in these areas, and the USDA noted in both citations that this chronic condition has been present since at least November 2014. Another bear, named Andy, is arthritic, according to Steele himself, and video footage obtained last July shows his labored gait. Our latest complaint details similar concerns and that a third bear, Cindi, was observed continuously pacing on concrete—a stereotypical behavior that indicates psychological distress.

Furthermore, the USDA has cited Steele for handling bears in a manner that doesn't ensure their safety or that of the viewing public. Currently, he allows people to have photographs taken with the bears and uses only a [thin Plexiglas barrier](#) and a leash to separate animals from visitors. This is, of course, extraordinarily dangerous and could subject your expo center to serious liability in the event of an [incident](#).

Because you didn't respond to my earlier correspondence, I'm left with no option but to alert our members and supporters that the Spokane County Fair & Expo Center does not share their concerns regarding animal welfare and is not interested in addressing the cruelty inflicted on bears used and abused for entertainment.

Please prioritize animal welfare and public safety by canceling Steele's cruel bear show. I look forward to hearing from you.

Very truly yours,

John Di Leonardo, M.S.  
Senior Campaigner, Animals in Entertainment

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