Tarzan Zerbini Circus and Two Tails Ranch

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Patricia Zerbini operates a roadside zoo in Florida called Two Tails Ranch, which uses elephants for rides, photo ops, weddings, circuses, and more. Her father, Tarzan Zerbini, operates the Tarzan Zerbini Circus, and boarded elephants at Two Tails Ranch when they were not traveling until he canceled his U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) license in January 2026. The elephants are all now inspected under Patricia's license. Tarzan still produces circuses and frequently leases elephants from Carson & Barnes Circus. Both Tarzan Zerbini and Two Tails Ranch have failed to meet minimum standards for the care of animals used in exhibition established under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The USDA has cited Tarzan Zerbini for for failing to maintain a veterinary-care program and medical records, failing to provide animals with minimum space, and failing to properly maintain transport vehicles. Two Tails Ranch has been cited for failing to maintain an adequate perimeter fence to keep animals and unauthorized persons out of the facility, failing to maintain enclosures in good repair, and failing to dispose of expired medical materials. Elephants from both exhibitors have endangered human health and safety: They have seriously injured humans and have been quarantined because of tuberculosis (TB) infection or exposure. Contact PETA for documentation.

March 19, 2024: The Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission issued a warning violation to Mark Wilson, the veterinarian for Two Tails Ranch, for unlawfully importing an elephant from Natural Bridge Zoo into the state of Florida (see entry dated December 1, 2023).

January 27, 2024: A tractor trailer caught fire on the highway while transporting animals from the Tarzan Zerbini Circus to Fort Wayne, Indiana, for performances with the Mizpah Shrine Circus. Five zebras, four camels, and one miniature horse were in the trailer when it caught fire in Grant County, Indiana. None of them were injured.

December 1, 2023: Asha, the solitary elephant previously held at Natural Bridge Zoo in Virginia, was moved to Two Tails Ranch in Florida, accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection signed by Natural Bridge Zoo's attending veterinarian on November 25, 2023. It was later determined that Mark Wilson, Two Tails Ranch's attending veterinarian, had failed to obtain a valid import permit before transporting Asha to Florida (see entry dated March 19, 2024).

June 21, 2023: The USDA cited both Tarzan Zerbini and Two Tails Ranch for failing to have an adult available to accompany officials during an inspection.

October 1, 2021: During an interview with the *Ocala Gazette*, Patricia Zerbini admitted that elephants "don't enjoy [public] encounters." She stated that elephants "don't like people touching them. They don't like to be rubbed on and pet, but that's what people want to do; that's what they really want … It doesn't mean anything to [elephants]. They don't comprehend petting." During the interview, she also stated that "elephants don't like their trunk or ears touched. … 'It's their nose. They smell with it. People just want to grab it all

the time,' … adding [that] touching an elephant's trunk, … ears or tail is a sign of aggression. 'It's not a good thing.'"

March 12, 2020: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to have an adult available to accompany officials during an inspection and failing to submit an updated itinerary prior to travel.

June 7, 2018: According to a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) inspection report, a 35-year-old African elephant named Anna Louise died suddenly shortly after being transferred to Two Tails Ranch by exhibitor Tom Demry. Demry had used Anna Louise for rides and exhibited her in circuses.

The inspection report also noted that a young lemur was able to escape from the cage to which he was confined and that several elephant paddocks did not meet the FWC's height or space requirements.

January 31, 2018: The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services placed an elephant named Luke under quarantine at Two Tails Ranch after he tested positive for TB in a trunk wash. The other elephants at the facility—including Bunny, Marie, Patty, Roxy, Schell, and Tika—were all considered exposed. Luke had tested positive for TB at least two times in the past.

April 21, 2016: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) suspended Tarzan Zerbini's permits to export two elephants to Canada for the 2016 Royal Canadian Circus season and then reimport them. The move followed PETA's lawsuit against the USFWS challenging its unlawful "pay-to-play" scheme, which allows exhibitors such as Tarzan Zerbini to pledge money to conservation groups in exchange for an endangered species permit. While PETA's lawsuit was pending, the agency noticed that Tarzan Zerbini had failed to make good on its financial pledge and suspended the permits.

August 26, 2013: An elephant named Rajah at Two Tails Ranch severely injured a woman who had approached his enclosure to take a photograph. He grabbed her with his trunk through the openings between the enclosure bars and pulled her against them. She sustained a collapsed lung, liver and kidney lacerations, damage to her spleen (which had to be removed), broken ribs, a broken wrist, and several large degloving wounds. The USDA cited Two Tails for failing to secure the perimeter fence so that an unauthorized person could not have contact with animals in the facility and assessed the facility a fine of $857.

December 12, 2012: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to have an adequate perimeter fence preventing animals or people from going under or through it and to act as a sufficient secondary containment system.

February 16, 2011: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to use appropriate measures to prevent elephants from being exposed to TB. Three elephants were housed in the same building with a plastic partition to separate airflow between Luke, a TB-positive male, and two female elephants. The partition had holes in it that allowed contaminated air to flow between the two sections, exposing the females to TB. Tarzan Zerbini was also cited for failing to maintain the perimeter fence around an elephant's exercise area, which put the elephant at risk of intrusion by unwanted visitors, both human and animal.

March 13, 2009: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to dispose of expired medications and for having insufficient perimeter fencing around the elephant enclosure.

March 12, 2009: The USDA cited Two Tails Ranch for failing to enclose all outdoor housing facilities with a perimeter fence of sufficient height to keep out animals and unauthorized persons. Several areas of the perimeter fence were found to be noncompliant with USDA standards. The perimeter fence did not completely enclose the primary enclosure for two zebras or the exercise pen for two elephants, and it did not meet the 8-foot height requirement around the elephant exercise pen or the enclosure for elephants Bunny, Shelly, and Marie. Two Tails was also cited for failing to dispose of expired medical materials and failing to maintain an outdoor housing facility for two zebras in good repair. The facility had electrical cords strung along the top of the enclosure fencing within reach of the zebras, posing a risk of injury.

May 21, 2008: The USDA confirmed that two elephants, Luke and Roxy, were under a TB-related quarantine at Two Tails Ranch.

March 31, 2008: Jan the elephant collapsed inside a barn and died. Between December 2007 and her death, she had alternated between residing at Two Tails Ranch and touring with the Tarzan Zerbini Circus. During this time, she exhibited signs of respiratory disease including nasal discharge, developed diarrhea while on tour, was lethargic and very thin with a poor appetite and muscle wastage along her back and shoulders, and developed uterine discharge. On March 28, 2008, her condition worsened, and her appetite decreased. A necropsy showed that she had pyometra (a uterine infection), pneumonia, lymphadenopathy, and TB. Other elephants at the facility—including Bunny, Marie, Schell, and Roxy—were all considered exposed to TB.

February 20, 2008: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to maintain the structural strength of an elephant barn, which had excessive rust and corroded metal along the base of one wall as well as rusty nails protruding through the wall and into the barn. Two elephants who were tethered inside the barn every night had access to this area. In addition, the inspector noted that an elephant named Jan was thin and undergoing treatment for a medical condition.

2008: According to USDA National Veterinary Services Laboratory records, an elephant named Luke, exhibited by Tarzan Zerbini, tested positive for TB.

December 21, 2005: The USDA issued Tarzan Zerbini a $250 civil penalty for importing TB samples obtained from three elephants into the U.S. from Canada without a USDA permit, despite having been made aware that such a permit was required. USDA correspondence notes, “This seems to be a case where everyone involved has ignored all of our instructions.”

November 14, 2005: The USDA cited Two Tails Ranch for failing to have a completed perimeter fence around the facility to keep animals and unauthorized persons out and function as a secondary containment system for animals at the facility.
February 1, 2005: The USDA cited Two Tails Ranch for failing to have someone present to accompany officials during an inspection.

January 31, 2005: An elephant handler with Tarzan Zerbini was trampled to death by one of the elephants as they were being loaded into a trailer following performances at the Mizpah Shrine Circus in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The handler suffered blunt force trauma to the chest and was in critical condition when taken to the hospital, where he later died.

August 16, 2004: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to have an adequate fence to contain the elephants properly and prevent the public from coming into contact with them, failing to have a perimeter fence, failing to have a written diet plan approved by the attending veterinarian that would provide elephants with a wholesome and healthy diet, and failing to dispose of waste in a sanitary manner. The waste was allowed to flow out onto the ground and down to a pond that animals had direct access to. On the east side of the property, there was a solid-waste dump area approximately 4 feet tall and 8 feet wide that animals were allowed access to. The circus was also cited for allowing water leaking from the well to pool around the transport trailer, where there was an electrical supply that elephants had access to, and failing to have any records for the elephants available for inspection.

August 2, 2002: According to *The Chronicle Herald* of Halifax, three elephants traveling with Tarzan Zerbini were quarantined in Ontario and removed from Canada on July 13, 2002, after the USDA alerted Canadian authorities that the elephants had been in prolonged contact with a TB-positive elephant.

According to the *Windsor Star*, the elephants had been performing for Shrine circuses and giving rides to children.

December 3, 2001: The USDA issued Tarzan Zerbini a $2,250 civil penalty to settle past violations of federal regulations, including for failing to give veterinary care to an elephant with a swollen foot, failing to provide elephants with shade, failing to include elephants in the program of veterinary care, repeatedly failing to maintain travel trailers in good repair, failing to maintain clean premises, and not storing food properly.

July 23, 2000: According to *The Daily News*, Tarzan Zerbini was forced to buy bigger overnight cages for the animals in order to meet Nova Scotia provincial laws.

2000: According to a USDA memorandum, an elephant named Luke, exhibited by Tarzan Zerbini, tested positive for TB and was treated “but the adequacy of treatment was questioned.” Luke and at least two of the handlers had previously been exposed to elephants used by the Ringling Bros. circus and the Hawthorn Corporation, which both had multiple TB-positive elephants.

November 23, 1999: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to provide an elephant named Roxy with adequate space where she could move freely. There was one exercise pen behind a barn where elephants spent the day unchained. Roxy was not “sufficiently compatible” with the other elephants, so she was kept chained in the barn.

November 3, 1999: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini again for failing to maintain the transport trailer properly. The walls had broken and splintered wood, the floor sagged in several spots and had rusted-through spots where the metal and wood met, and the front part of the fender well had come loose and had sharp edges.

May 4, 1999: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to supply adequate veterinary care to an elephant named Roxy, who had a swollen left front foot that needed to be examined by the attending veterinarian. The circus was also cited for failing to provide three elephants with shelter from sunlight and failing to store open bags of food properly. The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini again for failing to maintain the transport trailer properly—there was broken splintered wood on the sides, the top had loose plywood and missing insulation, and the metal floor had a small rusted hole

and loose metal in the corner that could cause injury to an elephant's foot.

April 24, 1999: A 27-year-old Tarzan Zerbini circus worker was hospitalized in serious condition after he was injured by an elephant who had broken free of her shackles in Duluth, Minnesota, where the circus was performing for the Aad Temple Shrine Circus. The ambulance crew at the scene observed that the injured worker smelled of alcohol. Another elephant trainer admitted that the elephants had been beaten badly by drunken trainers and were wary of people with alcohol on their breath. The circus worker was treated for injuries to his left leg, his pelvis, and the left side of his face.

November 18, 1998: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to maintain an elephant transport trailer properly. The expanded metal ventilation holes had broken openings and sharp points, and the wooden walls had broken areas.

April 13, 1997: A spooked Tarzan Zerbini elephant named Jan performing at the Al Azhar Shrine Circus in Calgary in Alberta, Canada, bit a handler on the head and back. He was hospitalized for his injuries. Circus officials reportedly dismissed the incident as "a normal hazard of the business."

March 17, 1997: A bear traveling with Tarzan Zerbini bit off a fingertip of a 2-year-old child in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She had to undergo surgery to repair her finger. Several students on a school field trip claimed that they were told that it was OK to pet the bears and that one worker even encouraged children to stick their hands into the cage.

January 4, 1997: According to an internal USDA memo, animals owned by Tarzan Zerbini may have been exposed to elephants from Hawthorn Corporation who had tested positive for TB. At the time, Tarzan Zerbini had seven elephants.

February 6, 1995: As animals and equipment were loaded onto trailers following the completion of performances for the Mizpah Shrine Circus in Fort Wayne, Indiana, an elephant named Roxy knocked a Tarzan Zerbini employee to the ground with her trunk and stomped on him. The employee was hospitalized in critical condition and suffered "severe crush injuries to the abdominal region."

December 8, 1994: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to have a written program of veterinary care and for failing to keep animal transport vehicles in good repair.

November 5, 1994: The USDA cited Tarzan Zerbini for failing to have a program of veterinary care and medical records available for inspection. The circus was also cited for failing to have records of acquisition and disposition.

April 25, 1994: Three children were injured during elephant rides at a Tarzan Zerbini performance in Michigan for the Muskegon Shrine Circus. An elephant "fell into the loading platform, emptying the passengers underneath and bending the platform."

July 16, 1992: Nine people were injured in Lafayette, Indiana, when elephants traveling with Tarzan Zerbini collided with a barricade, causing it to come toppling down into a crowd. The spectators were treated for cuts and bruises, and one woman was hospitalized.

September 14, 1990: The British Columbia Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Victoria, Canada, inspected Tarzan Zerbini and noted the following: All 15 horses had lacerations, open wounds, abrasions, or scars from old injuries. One

Appaloosa had a 6-inch–square wound. No water was freely available to the horses, and no water was provided for the two and a half hours the inspectors were present.

The tigers were in small cages with metal flooring at all times, except when performing in the show. No food or water was available during the inspection for any tiger except one, who, upon provision of water, drank "voraciously." Inspectors were advised that tigers were not given water freely because they would destroy the water dishes. Horse meat for the tigers was in a wheelbarrow that had obviously been left in the sun for some length of time, since the meat was black and hard. One tiger was observed pacing and rolling their head, which are signs of distress, and another exhibited "extreme aggressive" behavior toward Mr. Zerbini.

The cages for the monkeys were extraordinarily small and didn't allow them to stand fully upright. The monkey trainer indicated that they were given water to drink as needed because the monkeys tipped the bowls and made a mess. The trainer told an inspector that the monkeys and dogs are kept in cages at all times except for during show performances. Even though it was a warm day, no water was provided for the monkeys and dogs during the inspection.

The report noted that the lack of security for the protection of the animals and the public was "shocking." The entire area housing animals was open to the public. and "[o]ccasionally a circus employee would warn curious people away but for the most part the public wandered around at will." There were no ropes restraining an elephant who was noted as aggressive and no signs warning the public. During the visit, the inspector saw numerous children from a nearby elementary school walk right up to the tigers and put their hands in the cages. The chute that the tigers passed through to perform in the show was "comprised of salmon netting held open by aluminum hoops, hardly strong enough to contain a Bengal tiger …. If this wasn't bad enough, the chute had a large hole in it large enough for a tiger's head to pass through."

In her report, the inspector stated, "This circus, where the animals did not have food or water available, where the animals were kept entirely in cages too small to allow the least bit of movement or comfort, and where it was impossible to find anyone to accept basic responsibility for the care of the animals, was a prime example of everything that should not be allowed to occur in a circus."

June 21, 1988: According to an Ontario, Canada, conservation officer's law-enforcement report, while an elephant named Tyke (exhibited by the Hawthorn Corporation) was performing with Tarzan Zerbini, the "elephant handler was observed beating the single tusk African elephant in public to the point the elephant was screaming and bending down on 3 legs to avoid being hit." The document continued, "Even when the handler walked by the elephant after this[,] the elephant screamed and veered away demonstrating fear from his presence." According to a USDA report in response to a complaint submitted by the Canadian Department of Natural Resources, the handler was John Caudill (aka "John Walker" of Walker Bros. Circus), who purportedly was "disciplin[ing]" Tyke after she hit Caudill's brother and impaled his back with her tusk. Caudill's brother was hospitalized for the injury.