

PETA

INSPECTING TIGERS USED FOR TRAVELING ACTS





In the wild, tigers¹ live in surprisingly varied habitats, including dry thorn forests, mangrove swamps, tropical rain forests, and seasonally snow-covered woodlands. Tigers are apex predators and have home ranges of up to hundreds of square miles in their natural habitats.

However, circuses that use tigers routinely deny them adequate space and exercise, often leaving them confined to transport cages without the opportunity to exercise other than their brief performances. The U.S. Department of Agriculture² (USDA) has unequivocally stated that tigers should have an opportunity, at least daily, for exercise outside of the limited space of their transport cages—and aside from any practices and performances—in which they should be able to stretch to their full vertical height and length with adequate freedom of movement in a safe and secure location.³ Aside from ensuring that tigers have sufficient opportunities for exercise, it is important to inspect the housing (including for the presence of adequate safety barriers), behavior, and physical condition of tigers as well as the sanitation, veterinary records, and food storage. The checklist below should be helpful in performing inspections of tigers used for traveling acts to help ensure that their most basic needs are being met. Inspectors should take as many photographs and/or as much video footage as possible of the tigers and their housing in order to document conditions for law-enforcement purposes and so that independent experts will be able to provide helpful opinions, should the need arise. The value of an inspection depends on thoroughness and doing them unannounced (since exhibitors

are adept at “cleaning up” in preparation for an anticipated inspection) at varying times during the day and evening, during times when the tigers are not performing as well as when they are performing, and during times when the exhibitor claims that the cats will have access to an exercise pen (for verification of compliance with exercise and space requirements). Please be prepared to stand up to resistant exhibitors, who may try to intimidate law-enforcement officials in order to avoid inspections.

¹Although the focus of this inspection guide is on tigers, please note that the standards and guidelines are also useful for inspections of lions, leopards, cougars, and other big cats.

²Your role in inspecting animals used in circuses is critical to ensuring the humane treatment of these animals. The USDA enforces only the *minimum* standards of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), and the agency is required to conduct only *periodic* inspections. Moreover, the USDA has been criticized repeatedly by its own internal auditors for failing to enforce the AWA adequately. The USDA employs only about 100 inspectors to inspect *thousands* of exhibitors, dealers, research facilities, and other licensees. The USDA’s limitations underscore the critical role that you and other local law-enforcement officers play in protecting captive wild animals. Federal law accordingly states that the AWA does not preempt more protective state and local laws. See 7 U.S.C. § 2143(a)(8) (Federal animal welfare standards “shall not prohibit any State (or a political subdivision of such State) from promulgating standards in addition to those standards promulgated by the Secretary.”)

³USDA, *2013 Animal Care Inspection Guide*, pp. 4–61, available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Inspection%20Guide%20-%20November%202013.pdf (“Animals that normally engage in occasional vertical postures, such as bears and many felines, [should] have sufficient vertical space available to accommodate these postures”).

I. EXHIBITOR INFORMATION

1. Review the exhibitor's USDA license, and verify that it is current and has not expired.
2. USDA license number: _____

3. Name and contact information for the exhibitor:

4. Names and job descriptions of the exhibitor's handlers and authorized representatives on site: _____

II. TIGER ENCLOSURES: TIGERS SHOULD HAVE CONSTANT ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING WATER AND BE HOUSED IN A WAY THAT PROTECTS THEM FROM THE WEATHER AND EXTREME TEMPERATURES. CAGING SHOULD BE KEPT CLEAN AND SANITARY, WITH NO OVERPOWERING ODORS. ANIMALS WHO ARE HOUSED TOGETHER SHOULD BE COMPATIBLE AND NOT EXHIBIT SIGNS OF AGGRESSION TOWARD ONE ANOTHER.

1. Do tigers have access to clean drinking water at all times? Y/N

2. Does the tigers' housing provide them with adequate shelter from the sun, wind, precipitation, extreme temperatures, and other elements? Y/N

3. According to the National Weather Service, what is the range of high and low temperatures for the dates that the cats will be housed on the premises? _____

4. Are the cages in which the tigers are housed clean and free of odors from feces, urine, and ammonia? Y/N

5. How will tiger feces be disposed of while the cats are on site?

6. Do the cages in which the tigers are housed contain any sharp protrusions or other hazards? Y/N

7. Are ground surfaces free of hazardous conditions and debris? Y/N

8. Are cage floors kept dry and free of animal waste? Y/N

9. Are tigers who are housed in the same cage or enclosure cohabitating peacefully (i.e., no hissing, growling, swatting, fighting, or otherwise engaging in acts of aggression toward one another)? Y/N

If not, please describe: _____

10. Are the tigers exhibiting any signs of aggression toward the handlers? Y/N

If so, please describe (note: tigers should be observed during performances and while housed in the staging area in order to ascertain the nature of the interaction between the cats and the handlers): _____

11. Did you document the above conditions with photographs/video? Y/N

III. ADEQUATE SPACE AND EXERCISE

1. What are the dimensions of the enclosures housing tigers (in feet)? ____ x ____ x ____

2. How many tigers are housed in each cage? _____

3. How many cages are there? _____

4. Is there a daily exercise plan for the tigers? Y/N

If so, please describe it: _____

5. Have you confirmed with the exhibitor that the plan has been implemented? Y/N

If so, how (e.g., have you seen a designated exercise pen with tigers inside it)? _____

- 6. Is there an exercise pen (separate from the performance arena) that has been set up for the tigers? Y/N

- 7. What are the dimensions of the exercise pen (in feet)?
_____ x _____

- 8. What opportunities do the tigers have to stretch upright and fully extend their legs (aside from performances)? _____

- 9. What are the hours that the tigers have access to the exercise pen? _____

- 10. List the date(s) and time(s) that you visually observed tigers utilizing the exercise pen (it is important that you personally verify the exhibitor's representations regarding the cats' access to an exercise area): _____

- 11. Are the tigers under the direct supervision of an experienced handler at all times? Y/N

List the names of individuals who are responsible for supervising the tigers as well as the supervisory schedule/ shifts (which should account for all 24 hours of the day(s) that the cats will be on the premises): _____

- 12. Did you document the above conditions/ circumstances with photographs/video? Y/N

IV. HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR

1. How many tigers are present? _____

2. What are the dates that the tigers will be on the premises?

3. List the name, sex, age, microchip number, and color(s) of each tiger: _____

4. How many tigers will be used in the show(s)? _____

5. Describe the act for which the tigers will be used and indicate its duration: _____

6. Are all the tigers used for each performance? Y/N
If not, what is the rotation? _____

7. Are there any tigers traveling with the exhibitor who are not being used for the tiger act? Y/N

If so, which ones, and why are they not being used? _____

8. Are any of the tigers pregnant? Y/N

If so, describe which cat(s) and what stage of gestation they are in: _____

9. List the name and contact information of the attending veterinarian and the on-call veterinarian while the cats are traveling:

10. Ask the exhibitor to provide you with copies of the veterinary records for each of the cats in advance. Describe any medications being administered, injuries, medical conditions, or other conditions (and specify the particular cat). Also, verify that the cats have been provided with a veterinary evaluation and care for each condition and identify any inadequately addressed issues: _____

11. List all animal drugs in the possession of the exhibitor, along with expiration dates: _____

12. Are any tigers pacing? Y/N

If so, supply some details (identify and describe the tigers exhibiting the behavior, the rapidity, duration, etc.): _____

13. Are any tigers panting heavily? Y/N

If so, supply some details (identify and describe the tigers exhibiting the behavior, the rapidity, duration, etc.): _____

14. Do any of the tigers appear to be underweight?⁴ Y/N
15. Do any of the tigers appear to be overweight? Y/N
16. Do any of the tigers appear to lack muscle tone? Y/N
17. Are any tigers limping or displaying other signs of injury? Y/N
18. Are there any visible open sores or areas that are raw or bleeding? Y/N
19. Are there any signs inside the cages or on the tigers' hindquarters indicating that any of the tigers are suffering from diarrhea? Y/N
20. Are there any signs of urine on the cats' legs or hindquarters? Y/N

21. Have any of the tigers been declawed? Y/N

If so, please describe which tigers, and list the dates on which they were declawed and the name(s) of the veterinarian(s) who performed the procedure(s):⁵ _____

22. Have any of the tigers had teeth removed? Y/N

If so, please describe which tigers and which teeth were removed and list the dates on which they underwent tooth extraction and the name(s) of the veterinarian(s) who performed the procedure(s): _____

23. Did you document the above conditions/circumstances with photographs/video? Y/N

⁴See USDA, *2013 Animal Care Inspection Guide*, Appendix D—Body Condition Charts (tigers, p. D-9; lions, p. D-8; leopards, p. D-7); available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Inspection%20Guide%20-%20November%202013.pdf.

⁵Declawing is no longer allowed under the Animal Welfare Act. According to USDA policy, declawing is an inappropriate procedure because it “can cause ongoing pain, discomfort, or other pathological conditions in the animals” and fails to “prevent predatory behaviors, safeguard the general public, or prevent biting.” USDA, *Policy # 3: Veterinary Care* (March 25, 2011), available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/policy.php?policy=3; see also, USDA, Information Sheet on Declawing and Tooth Removal, available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/big_cat/declaw_tooth.pdf.

⁶See USDA, *Policy #16: Proper Diets for Nondomestic Felids*, available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/policy.php?policy=16.

V. NUTRITION

1. What kind of diet are the tigers being fed? _____

2. Do the nutrition and feeding schedule comply with the USDA's Policy No. 16: Proper Diets for Nondomestic Felids? Y/N

If not, please note any deficiencies: _____

3. If the exhibitor is feeding the cats a noncommercial diet, does the exhibitor have proof that the diet has been approved by a veterinarian? Y/N

4. Is there a regular feeding schedule? Y/N

How frequently are the tigers fed and what quantities of food?

5. Is the exhibitor providing the tigers with any supplements/vitamins? Y/N

If so, please inspect and photograph the supplements/ vitamins and describe what they are and why they are being administered: _____

- a. Which tigers are receiving the supplement(s)/vitamin(s)? _____

- b. Are the supplement(s)/vitamin(s) being administered under the supervision of a veterinarian or as part of the written program of veterinary care? Y/N

- 6. Is the food intended for consumption by the tigers properly refrigerated? Is any food being stored without refrigeration?⁶ Y/N

- 7. Is the food storage area clean and free of strong odors? Y/N

- 8. Describe the appearance of any meat intended for tiger consumption (color, texture, smell, etc.): _____

- 9. What kind of receptacle is the food kept in? _____

- 10. How is food transported between the food storage area and the cages? _____

- 11. Are all the receptacles sanitary and used only for food? Y/N

- 12. Did you document the above conditions/circumstances with photographs/video? Y/N

VI. SAFETY

1. Does the exhibitor have a written safety plan? Y/N

If so, please obtain a copy.

2. Are there adequate and secure safety barriers in place to prevent public access to the area where the tigers are housed?⁷ Y/N

3. What tools or devices are used to handle the tigers (e.g., wooden rods, prods, whips, etc.)? _____

4. Is the exhibitor in possession of any electric devices intended to control the cats? Y/N

If so, please describe: _____

5. What type of enclosure is used during performances? Describe its height, the material it's made from, how the enclosure is secured, whether the top of the enclosure is open or covered, whether there are kick-ins, etc. _____

6. Are any of the tigers being used for photo opportunities? Y/N

- a. If so, is the public allowed to have direct physical contact with the cat(s) during the photo ops? Y/N

- b. What are the names and ages of the cats used for the photo opportunities? What is the source of this information?⁸ _____

 - c. What safety precautions are taken during such direct-contact activities? _____

7. What is the exhibitor’s plan to contain tiger(s) in the event of an escape? _____

8. Did you document the above conditions/circumstances with photographs/video? Y/N

⁷See USDA, 2013 Animal Care Inspection Guide: Lion and Tiger Enclosure Heights and Kick-ins, pp. 4-26–4-29, available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/Inspection%20Guide%20-%20November%202013.pdf, for additional guidance on safety of big cat enclosures.

⁸USDA policy points out the “inherent danger present for both the viewing public and the exhibited animal(s) where there is any chance that the public could come into direct contact with juvenile or adult big cats,” and the federal agency “generally considers big cats to become juveniles when they reach 12 weeks of age.” See *In re: Jamie Michelle Palazzo*, AWA Docket No. 07-0207 (2010) at 2; see also USDA Big Cat Question and Answer, Commonly Asked Big Cat Questions, interpreting 9 C.F.R. § 2.131(c)(1), available at http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_welfare/downloads/big_cat/big_cat_q&a.pdf.

VII. TRANSPORT

1. Inspect the vehicle(s) used to transport the tigers.
2. What type of vehicle is used to transport the tigers? _____

3. List the names and driver's license numbers of any individuals responsible for driving the vehicles that are used to transport the cats, along with the applicable AWA license number: _____

4. Are transport vehicles properly ventilated or air-conditioned? Y/N
5. What is the temperature inside the transport vehicles? _____
6. Do transport vehicles appear to be structurally sound and free of unsafe/hazardous conditions? Y/N
7. Do there appear to be any conditions inside the vehicles that could be injurious to the animals? Y/N

If so, please describe: _____

- 8. How long are the big cats confined to the transport vehicles at one time? _____

- 9. According to what source? _____

- 10. Did you document the above conditions/circumstances with photographs/video? Y/N

Inspector(s): _____

Date: _____

Time of inspection: _____ a.m./p.m. until _____ a.m./p.m.

Licensee/licensee's authorized representative:

Signature of licensee/licensee's authorized representative acknowledging receipt of inspection report results and instructions regarding any deficiencies and how they must be corrected:

The PETA logo consists of the word "PETA" in a white, bold, italicized sans-serif font, centered within a solid black square.

PETA

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