



Ottawa Humane Society

MEDIA RELEASE

Time for wild animal acts in circuses is over, says Ottawa Humane Society

OTTAWA, Ont. (23 November, 2004) – On the eve of the Big Top coming to town, the Ottawa Humane Society is challenging city residents to think hard before they attend an event that exploits wild animals—and may place their children at risk. “Given the well-established documentation of mistreatment of circus animals,” says OHS Executive Director Bruce Roney, “the time for wild animal acts in circuses is over.” Roney urges Ottawa residents to help bring such acts to an end in Ottawa by not attending circus events that involve wild animal acts.

While attendees will likely not witness any animal abuse at a performance this week, Roney emphasizes that just because the event is ‘legal,’ that does not make it humane or ethical. “It’s critical for an animal’s health and well-being that it be able to express normal behaviour. Elephants, for example, are nomadic by nature and travel great distances. Sure, these animals travel great distances—confined in tractor trailers. They spend most of their lives confined in those trailers or in small pens,” he says. In fact, many circus animals are on the road up to ten or 11 months of the year.

Roney states that people often believe that they’re providing an educational opportunity for their children to see an animal they might otherwise never see. “If you want to educate your children about wild animals, try the Internet or a reputable zoo—not the circus,” he says. “What’s educational about watching an elephant perform tricks? This certainly isn’t what you’d see in their own habitat.”

While the City recently revised its bylaws to make it more difficult for travelling wild animal acts to perform in Ottawa, Roney is adamant that until performances involving wild animals are banned, it’s just not good enough. “The City shouldn’t be licensing animal cruelty,” he says.

The OHS also warns the public that, beyond concern for the animals, a public safety risk exists that may not be understood. “These are wild animals. They remain wild animals despite their ‘training.’ Each year, there are documented cases of animals rampaging and injuring—even killing—spectators and handlers.” And not just in foreign areas—Roney cites a case in Timmins, Ontario in 1999, where an elephant killed an employee between circus performances.

For more information:

Sharon Miko, Outreach Manager
725-3166, ext. 261; 277-3125 (cell)

For more documentation of incidents involving wild circus animals, visit:

<http://www.zoocheck.com/programs/entertain/Incident.shtml>

A word about the Ottawa Humane Society:

The Ottawa Humane Society is a registered charity founded in 1888. The Society works in and with the community to provide leadership in the humane treatment of all animals, to address the causes of animal suffering, to encourage people to take responsibility for their animal companions, and to provide care for animals who are neglected, abused, exploited, stray, or homeless.