

1. Animals in Entertainment

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Introduction

Animals are used in a variety of different ways to provide human entertainment. The use of animals in entertainment creates serious issues both in terms of the welfare of the individual animal as well as species conservation in some cases. The entertainment industry covers an enormous range of uses of animals. In fact, this is probably the most diverse area of animal abuse. It is probably also the least 'justifiable'. There are welfare problems in most cases, and the most extreme forms of 'entertainment' cause immense suffering and many animal deaths.

Zoos and Dolphinarium

The zoo concept originated as the ancient menageries of kings and emperors and evolved to become the Victorian collections of the 19th Century. Animals were largely kept as indications of wealth and power, or displayed as a curiosity. Animals were perceived as little more than objects and little thought was given to their needs. They were confined to small spaces in barren cages, permanently on show to the viewing public. Their enclosures bore little resemblance to their natural habitats.

In the region of 6,000 species are either threatened or endangered, yet only a handful are in captive breeding programmes and only around twenty have actually been returned to the wild with any degree of success. Out of an estimated 10,000 zoos worldwide, less than 500 register their animals on an international species database. Of these, it is estimated that only between five and ten per cent of space is devoted to endangered species. Most animals in zoos, for example the African lions, elephants, and giraffes, are not threatened - they are simply exhibits

Despite claims to the contrary, only a tiny minority of zoos conduct viable scientific studies, which are largely directed at alleviating the physical and psychological problems caused by confinement in zoos. Such research has limited or no application to wild animals in their natural habitat. There is more about zoos in the wildlife section of this module.

Dolphinaria are places where whales and dolphins are kept in captivity, and are usually trained to perform for human spectators. They cause many animal protection problems.

The capture of cetaceans (and seals, turtles) from the wild has had an impact on wild populations, and the losses (mortality) between capture and placement in the exhibition give additional stress to wild populations. The methods used for wild capture (netting and driving to nets or to shore) are likely to be very stressful to the animals and there is a risk of injury and mortality to animals that escape.

Captivity means a lifetime in restricted space, with limited scope to perform 'natural' hunting, social and reproductive behaviours. There is also a higher mortality, and shortened lifespan of animals after capture: Although captive animals are protected from predation and some of the extremes of environment, many would argue that these hazards are 'natural' risks for which the animals have been equipped by evolution. Removal of natural hazards is unlikely to compensate for the severe behavioural and spatial restrictions placed on free ranging marine mammals in captivity.

Circuses

Circuses house and confine animals in small cages, sometimes for as long as 23 hours in each day. They are also sometimes chained, as well as caged. The animals suffer from reduced freedom to express natural behaviours. Also, 'life on the road' as the circus travels to different places to perform, means repeated transport in confinement for these animals.

While circus promoters claim that trainers use only 'positive reinforcement' methods (rewards) to train animals, animal protection investigations document a different picture. Circus training methods still use methods involving fear, submission, deprivation and physical punishment. These include beating and whipping animals, and depriving them of food. Trainers sometimes strike elephants with sharpened hooks, which can result in physical injury. Trainers resort to brutal methods to maintain a position of dominance. Yet wild animals will always behave in instinctive and unpredictable ways and can never be made willing or safely manageable through training.

Many circuses don't bother to provide regular, competent veterinary care. Animals who are not obedient or who have grown too old to perform may be sold or given to zoos, roadside attractions, research laboratories, or private individuals—options unlikely to improve their quality of life.

Like zoos, circuses provide a negative educational message. Watching wild animals perform unnatural tricks outside their natural habitats does not teach children anything about the animals. By displaying bears as tricycle-riding caricatures and by dressing elephants in tutus, circuses present animals as creatures whose purpose is to amuse us, rather than creatures with an intrinsic value and their own nature and behaviour.

Hunting

Many different animals are hunted for entertainment. These commonly include: deer, foxes, hare, mink and wild boar. In some countries, other indigenous wild animals are also hunted, including endangered species. Hunting 'safaris' are becoming widespread, and rich tourists travel to exotic destinations to hunt exotic wildlife and marine mammals (including shark and 'big fish' 'sport' hunting).

As with other uses of animals in entertainment, there can be no justification for this cruelty and death, purely to satisfy human's lust for perverse forms of entertainment. Sometimes hunt supporters try to justify their actions by claiming that the animals they hunt need to be 'controlled'. Even if this was the case, there are more efficient and humane control methods (for example, shooting by a trained marksman).

Hunting with dogs is carried out in some countries. This is a particularly cruel sport. Hounds are bred for stamina, providing the 'sport' of a lengthy chase. The fox, or other prey animal, is forced to run as far and as fast as it can until exhausted, when the hounds will catch and kill it. Hunters claim that the fox is killed instantly, but evidence has shown again and again that the fox is just as likely to be torn apart alive. Hunting with hounds has now been banned in the UK, but previously UK hunts could kill 20,000 foxes and their cubs annually. There are alternatives to this unnecessary bloodsport, such as drag hunting, which is carried out in Germany (and involves no prey animal).

Canned Hunting

Even more bizarre and cruel than 'normal' hunting, canned hunting involves the killing of an animal in an enclosure to obtain a trophy. The animals are sometimes tame exotic mammals. These animals do not know to run from humans. Some are captive wild animals and/or purpose bred wild animals. Some are sold to canned hunting operations by zoos. Many groups that support hunting scorn canned hunting for its unsportsmanlike practice; patrons are guaranteed a kill (and some with little aptitude or experience of hunting take this option, leading to wounding and casualties in the attempted kill). Several USA states now ban canned hunting operations, but the practice is spreading. It is also carried out in South Africa.

Bear Baiting

Bear baiting involves pitting dogs against bears in a cruel and brutal display. This is also for sick entertainment, and sometimes gambling. Mortality and injury are severe to both bears and dogs, which are involved in the fight. Injury is the spectacle in this event. If the dogs do not attack, and the bear does not defend itself, then there is no spectacle.

Capture from the wild raises similar issues as with other captive animals, with injury and mortality at capture, and the destruction of family groups of bears to provide individuals suitable for fighting.

There is also a severe restriction of natural behaviours in confinement. The bear will be confined for its entire life, and may travel over long distances to repeat the fight in different areas. The public, viewing only aggressive interactions between dogs and bears, will reinforce the view of wild animals as aggressive dangers, and an understanding of their natural history is lost.

Dancing Bears

There are many welfare issues faced by dancing bears. Firstly, bear cubs are taken from the wild and their mothers are usually killed. This has implications for wild populations of bears such as sloth bears, which are threatened in some regions of India. Then the muzzle is pierced (without anaesthetic) and a tether inserted to allow the bear to be controlled. The acute pain and distress of this process becomes the chronic, lifelong

discomfort of a non-healing wound in the mouth, which the animal must endure for the whole of its life. It is then subjected to cruel training methods, and a lifetime of captivity and performance.

Bullfighting

There were 975 bullfights in Spain and France in 2002, which resulted in 5,623 bulls being killed. Bullfighting is also carried out in certain Latin American countries. This is an extreme example of animal suffering and death purely for human entertainment. WSPA is carrying out an international campaign against bullfighting.

The bull is subjected to tremendous pain and unnecessary distress both in the bullring and beforehand. Injuries to bulls in 'preparation' for the fight and the use of the pica and banderillas (hand-held harpoons decorated with brightly coloured weighted banners) in the ring are designed to enrage the bull in order to give a better 'spectacle' and to maintain levels of aggression to prolong the bullfight.

The harpoons usually stay embedded in its back, causing the bull to lose more blood and open the wounds further. Once the bull is disabled by injury, weakened by loss of blood and in pain, the matador enters the ring.

During the kill, the use of the long sword to penetrate the heart is not completely reliable, and would not be permitted in any regulated slaughterhouse. An assistant, the puntillero, will then stab the downed bull with a puntilla, a short, broad knife, to sever its spinal cord. Finally, its ears or tail are cut off with a knife to be given to the matador as a trophy. All too often still alive, the bull is tied by the horns and is dragged out of the ring.

Despite wearing armour, the horses used to steer and marshal the bulls are sometimes also injured and gored.

Fiestas and Rodeos

Animals in fiestas and rodeos are also subjected to unnecessary distress and suffering, including goading of the animals to maintain their 'aggressive' interactions with man. This reinforces the public's view that animals such as bulls are aggressive hazards and therefore can be treated with reduced care. This is yet another example of animal suffering for the sake of sick ('traditional') entertainment.

Many thousands of these horrific Blood Fiestas take place in villages throughout Spain (and certain other Latin American countries) each year. The vast majority use cattle as their victims. Bulls, cows and calves from the bullfighting herds are tortured and killed. Blood Fiestas with cattle are classified as bullfighting.

After cattle, chickens are the next most used creatures in Blood Fiestas. They also use some other animals such as pigs, geese, ducks, donkeys, squirrels, rabbits, pigeons etc.

Some of the now notorious Spanish fiestas involving animal cruelty first exposed and brought to prominence include: -

- The Pero Palo fiesta where a donkey is paraded through the streets of Villanueva de la Vera and abused (fed with alcohol, beaten and crushed by crowds)
- A goat being paraded in the streets, before being thrown from a high church tower in Manganeses de la Polvorosa

- Chickens hung from a line and hand decapitated by horsemen in Nalda
- Pigeons and squirrels in clay pots stoned in Robledo de Chavela
- Live chickens hung from a line hacked to pieces by blindfolded young girls with blunted swords in Tordesillas
- Chickens buried to their necks and decapitated by blindfolded villagers in Aduna

Rodeos can consist of various events including calf or steer roping, steer wrestling and bucking events where the contestant tries to stay on a bucking horse or bull. All of these events can cause severe injuries to the animals and can involve practices, such as prior injury or harm, to make the animal appear more aggressive.

Even the gentlest horse will buck when subjected to the type of flank strap that is placed on bulls and broncos at rodeos. Flank straps are tightly cinched near the animal's abdominal organs and pinch the animal's groin and/or genitals to cause them to buck. Electric prods, caustic ointments, and whips are often used to irritate and enrage the animals prior to their performances.

The entire notion of rodeo being a reflection of the Wild West is a farce - real cowboys didn't ride bulls, wrestle steers, or place bucking straps on animals.

Other Cruel Sports

In cruel blood sports, such as dog fighting and cock fighting, animals are pitted against each other in a cruel fight to the death. Although dog fighting is banned everywhere in the U.S. and U.K., investigations show that it occurs regularly in both countries. It also happens in other countries, and in some is not even banned by law.

Dog fighting can be enormously cruel and vicious, causing immense suffering and deaths – for no other purposes than sick entertainment and gambling. Dogs have a complex domesticated relationship with humans. One of the first steps in domestication is likely to have been removal of very aggressive or overtly territorial dogs so that they could co-exist with humans, and with other dogs. To make fighting between dogs a spectator activity is likely to cause selection over time of animals which show aggressive traits which are ‘unusual’ for domesticated dogs, and the occurrence of ‘dangerous’ breeds in some countries has been the end result of this de-domestication process.

Cock fighting is common in some Latin American and Asian countries.

Racing

Racing is another example of human use of animals merely for entertainment and pleasure. The pleasure derives primarily from gambling on the outcome of the race. Buffalo racing, camel racing, dog and horse racing, etc. are all activities outside the normal expectation for the wild animal equivalents of the domesticated species. Certain horse races (e.g. steeplechases) are closely linked to the ‘thrill’ of hunting, and can involve large jumps that cause falls, injury and deaths to hoes. Two notorious examples are the UK’s Grand National and the ‘Great Pardubice’ steeplechase in the Czech Republic.

There are also reports of harsh training methods and performance enhancing treatments (such as drugs, electrical stimuli, whips, etc. as would be expected with so much money

at stake. Then, animals that do not meet performance expectations are disposed of – some horses may go to a good home, but many animals are simply killed.

Tourist Entertainment and Photography

Immature animals are often used as photographic models, with or without people, because they are less likely to be aggressive, and are not as strong as adults. Some will be taken from the wild (e.g. primates). Life ‘on the road’ means that housing conditions will likely be poor. Normal behaviours are suppressed. Confinement, often alone, may lead to depression and stereotypic behaviours.

Animals are also often used for tourist rides. Animals such as donkeys may have to bear too much more weight, causing suffering. Exotic animals, such as camels and elephants, will not be able to be kept in circumstances that respect their behaviour and needs. The animals are just viewed as sources of tourist amusement, giving a poor educational example. Also, when not in use, for example, outside the tourist season, the animals may be neglected.

Use of Animals in Filming

The use of animals for film and television is monitored in the UK and USA to ensure that there is no animal suffering. In the UK, the RSCPA tends to review after the event, whereas in the USA there is prior checking.

The American Humane (AHA)’s Film & Television Unit has travelled worldwide to protect animals in filmed entertainment.

Legislation

Some countries have legislation to protect animals used in entertainment. This can include: -

- Licensing of establishments, such as zoos and circuses
- Licensing of premises where wild animals may be kept (public safety and animal protection)
- Direct prohibition of acts or activities
- Direct prohibition of use of certain species of animal in entertainment (for example, Finland’s prohibition of the use of exotic animals)
- Local legislation or orders to prohibit animal entertainment in the region (e.g. banning circuses from land within local - e.g. municipal - jurisdiction)
- Welfare conditions for captivity e.g. space allowances
- General provisions against any training, working, competitions, spectacles, races etc. that would be likely to cause suffering
- Requirement for pre-approval of any new uses/purposes, species, equipment etc.
- Acceptable methods of killing for control purposes to be specified (e.g. shooting by trained marksman), and unacceptable methods (e.g. trapping, hunting with hounds etc.) banned

Common problems include: -

- Poorly designed legislation that is difficult for courts to interpret
- Limited resources
- Variable enforcement
- Who will appoint inspectors and enforcement officers?

- Who will train inspectors and enforcement officers (including in animal welfare for a large number of species, domestic and wild)?
- Dangerous undercover operations will be needed to find out about illegal activities, such as dog fighting
- Enforcement body shares interests with those policed
- Bribery and corruption hamper enforcement
- Responsibility for enforcement being spread between government departments, so reducing co-ordination
- Practical difficulties in monitoring animals that travel across boundaries, including international boundaries
- Limits to powers of access, stop and search, seizure and detention
- Practical limitations of seizing/detaining wild animals
- Practical implications for withdrawing licences

Further Resources

🔗 Web Sites

Animal Defenders – Animals in Entertainment

http://www.ad-international.org/animals_in_entertainment/

Circuses.com

<http://www.circuses.com/>

Born Free Foundation - Zoo Check

<http://www.bornfree.org.uk/campaigns/zoo-check/>

League Against Cruel Sports

<http://www.league.uk.com/>

World Society for the Protection of Animals

<http://www.wspa-international.org/>

Includes anti-bullfighting

Captive Animals' Protection Society

<http://www.captiveanimals.org/>

American Humane Association Film and TV Unit

<http://www.ahafilm.org/>

Includes guidelines for the use of animals in films and media

Fight Against All Animal Cruelty in Europe (FAACE)

<http://www.faace.co.uk/>

Compassionate Travel

<http://www.helpinganimals.com/travel.asp>

The Electronic Zoo

<http://netvet.wustl.edu/e-zoo.htm>

PETA Animals in Entertainment

<http://www.animalactivist.com/entertainment.asp>

Books

The Rose Tinted Menagerie

http://www.iridescent-publishing.com/rtm_home.htm

A History of Animals in Entertainment, from Ancient Rome to the 20th Century

Last Great Wild Beast Show

By: Bill Jordan, Stefan Ormrod

Publisher: Constable

ISBN: 009461900X

Beyond the Bars

By: Virginia McKenna, Jonathan Wray and William Travers

Publisher: Borgo Pr

ISBN: 0809570769

Animals in Circuses and Zoos: Chiron's World?

By: Marthe Kiley-Worthington

Publisher: Aardvark Publishing

ISBN: 1872904025

Spotlights on Performing Animals

By: E Westacott (Editor)

Publisher: CW Daniel

ISBN: 0852071086

Second Nature: Environmental Enrichment for Captive Animals (Zoo & Aquarium Biology & Conservation S.)

By: Terry Maple (Foreword), David J. Shepherdson (Editor), Jill D. Mellen (Editor), Michael Hutchins (Editor)

Publisher: Smithsonian Books

ISBN: 1560983973