



IN DEFENSE OF ANIMALS

March 17, 2011

Via email

Dr. Elizabeth Goldentyer
Eastern Regional Director
USDA, APHIS, Animal Care
920 Main Campus Drive, Suite 200
Raleigh, NC 27606-1401

Dear Dr. Goldentyer:

Please consider this an urgent complaint on behalf of In Defense of Animals (IDA) concerning the elephant Liz, exhibited by George Hanneford, Jr., under the name Hanneford Family Circus (Cert. No 58-C-0666, Cust. ID 3149) of Myakka City, Florida.

The Hanneford elephants were observed performing with a Shrine Circus in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Sunday, March 13, 2011. Liz was not used in the performance, at least for the 1:30 show. (It appears from media reports that she has not been performing for at least two weeks.) She remained chained by two legs, unable to take more than one step forward or back, and was standing backstage on cement for the entire duration of the show, intermission and rides.

Liz's appearance is alarming. She appears emaciated, her ribs clearly visible and spine protruding (see video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixWkBAvFeDc>). This elephant is clearly underweight, which could be the result of or a symptom of any number of serious underlying medical or husbandry problems. Liz also exhibits an abnormal gait, clearly due to problems with one front and one rear leg.

Further, Liz exhibited severe stereotypic behavior for the duration of the time she was observed, which should of itself be cause for requiring a thorough medical and behavioral evaluation.

IDA is aware that your agency cited this exhibitor on February 13, 2011, for most of these problems, with an order to correct by March 14. That order included the requirement that the exhibitor use appropriate methods to maintain the elephant's health and, due to her age and the nature of her deformities, she was to be evaluated by a veterinarian who is experienced in elephant medicine and assessed for her suitability for performances and travel.

Given the observations made on March 13, IDA fails to see how this exhibitor could be found to be in compliance by the correct-by date. The very fact that Liz was still on the road, despite her condition, significant weight loss and physical deformities, demonstrates that this exhibitor has no intention of taking the action necessary to protect this elephant's health and well-being. Further, the exhibitor clearly failed to "use appropriate methods to maintain the health of the animal" by keeping Liz chained for prolonged periods on hard surfaces like concrete – conditions that will only cause further mental and physical deterioration.

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If not done so already, IDA urges your agency to immediately remove Liz from travel due to the extreme nature of her condition and ensure that she is evaluated by a qualified, independent veterinarian for treatment. Considering the seriousness of her condition and the obvious failure of the exhibitor to maintain the health of this elephant, we urge you to confiscate Liz before her condition worsens.

I look forward to your immediate response to this urgent matter. Please contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

Deborah Robinson, Esq
Captive Elephant Specialist
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