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PRESS RELEASE

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus is charged with abusing endangered Asian elephants, and former employee Tom Rider has new videotape evidence – obtained from Ringling Bros. itself – to prove his case. Rider, who quit the circus in 1999 to speak out against its cruelty, is protesting the circus's Feb. 17 opening in Atlanta.

Some of the gruesome footage shows the birth of Riccardo, an elephant who died at the age of 8-months last August, after he fractured both hind legs when he fell off a circus pedestal. Riccardo's mother, Shirley, was only 6-years-old – less than half the age at which elephants normally begin to breed – and was not able to care for him properly.

"Ringling Bros. said the mother rejected him," Rider said, describing how animal handlers pulled Riccardo away from Shirley shortly after his birth. "Ringling tortures a baby elephant from the second it's born."

Sadly, there have been several casualties in recent years. One baby elephant drowned after disavowing his handler's commands, and another died after being forced to perform, despite obvious illness and rectal bleeding.

Elephants, hauled around the country by Ringling Bros., are beaten with sharp metal bullhooks. A majority of these social, loving, intelligent animals were captured in the wild and now suffer from being mistreated in captivity and confined in chains; many exhibit stereotypic behavior such as chronic swaying. Tom Rider, the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI), the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Fund for Animals are suing Ringling Bros. because its appalling treatment of elephants is a violation of the Endangered Species Act.



**Animal Welfare
Institute**