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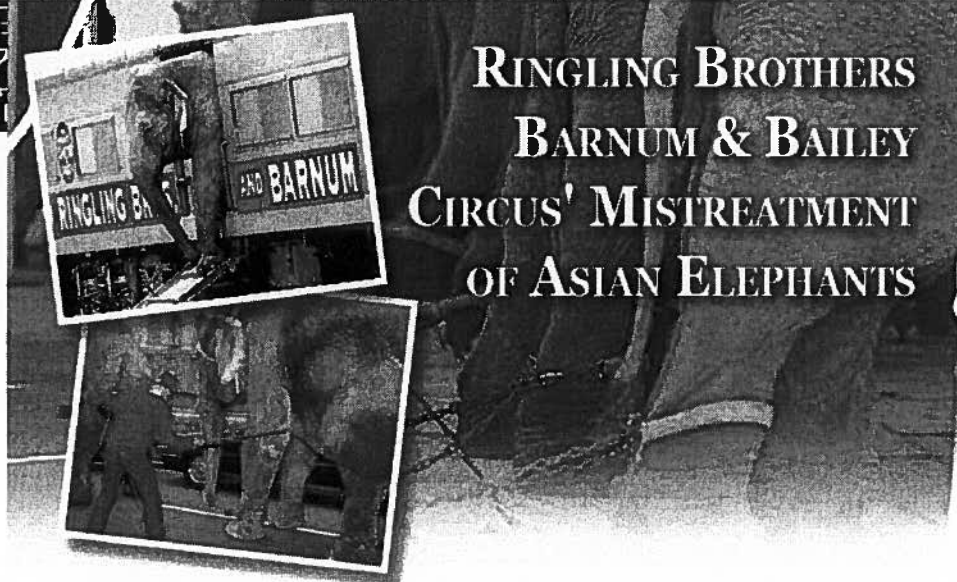
**Ringling Brothers Circus  
Mistreatment of Asian  
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**RINGLING BROTHERS  
BARNUM & BAILEY  
CIRCUS' MISTREATMENT  
OF ASIAN ELEPHANTS**

In recent years, several former employees of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus have been shedding light on the way elephants are mistreated under the Big Top – the animals are "broken," "trained," and "disciplined" with sharp metal bull hooks, and kept on chains for most of their lives. Other members of the public have captured the mistreatment on videotape, as the circus arrives in their cities and towns.

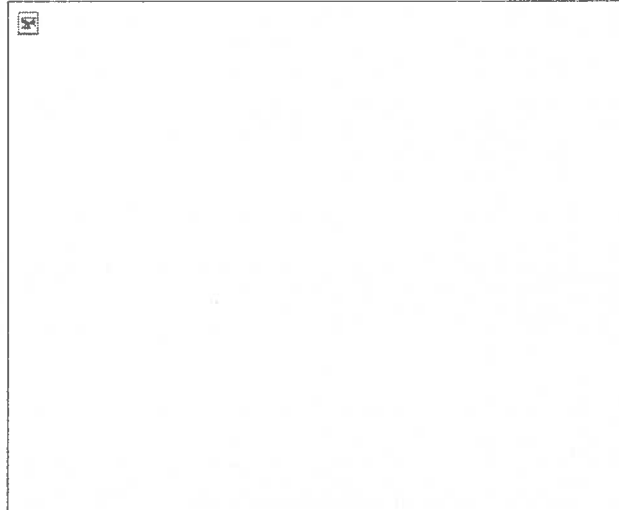
These accounts of mistreatment and abuse have spurred people throughout the country to speak up on behalf of the elephants. One prominent spokesman has been Tom Rider, who worked for the circus for two and a half years from 1997 to 1999. The Wildlife Advocacy Project supports these efforts to educate the public about how circus elephants are really treated and to dispel the myths perpetuated by these extremely profitable circuses. If you want to make a tax deductible contribution to our public education campaign on this issue, click [donate now](#).



**Click here** to see live footage of Ringling Brothers' mistreatment of elephants on YouTube (or click on video player below). To learn more about elephants, the Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, and efforts to protect elephants from abuse keep reading. See also www.meyerglitz.com for information about a lawsuit brought against Ringling Brothers under the Endangered Species Act).

See also Animal Protection Institute and The Animal Welfare Institute

> Next page - About Asian Elephants



**... More on Ringling Brothers and Circus Elephants:**

### **About Asian Elephants**

Asian Elephants, the elephant species most often used by circuses, are endangered in the wild, due to poaching, hunting, and the destruction of their natural habitat. They are listed as "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act, which prohibits anyone from "killing," "harming," or "harassing" them. To learn more [click here](#).

### **About Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus**

Dubbed the "Cruellest Show on Earth" by many animal advocates, Ringling Brothers has three traveling circuses: the "Red" and "Blue" Units, and the "Gold Unit" or "Hometown Edition." It also has both a breeding and retirement facility for the elephants it uses in it's circus. To learn more [click here](#).

### **Tools of the Circus Trade**

The cruel way in which circus elephants are broken, trained, disciplined, and transported are all indicative of a life of misery in the circus. To learn more [click here](#).

### **Elephant Mistreatment At Ringling Brothers**

As described by several former Ringling Brothers employees, there is a culture of abuse at the circus that includes the constant use of bull hooks and other weapons on the elephants, and routine chaining while the elephants are transported throughout the country to perform. The animals perform between 48-50 weeks each year, with up to 3 performances a day. They are chained in box cars while traveling from town to town, chained all night long, and chained for most of the day. The mistreatment occurs with both adult and baby elephants. To learn more [click here](#).

### **Baby Elephants Are Also Mistreated**

From the time they are born at Ringling Brothers' breeding facility, the baby elephants are torn away from their mothers, trained with bull hooks to perform tricks in the circus, and kept on chains. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has concluded that Ringling Brothers' routine "separation" of baby elephants from their mothers – using ropes around their legs to forcibly remove the nursing babies from their mothers – causes the young elephants "trauma, behavioral stress, physical harm, and unnecessary discomfort." In recent years, at least four baby elephants have died prematurely while under Ringling Brothers' care. To learn more [click here](#).

### **Circus Myths**

Circuses with animals are still around today because of several myths they perpetuate to convince the public that this is a harmless "all-American" activity. To learn more [click here](#).

### **What you can do**

While the infamous founder of Ringling Brothers circus, P.T. Barnum, boasted that "there's a sucker born every minute," it is up to the public to learn the truth about what goes on behind the Big Top. To learn more [click here](#).

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"WE HAD AN ELEPHANT DRIPPING BLOOD ALL OVER THE ARENA FLOOR DURING THE SHOW FROM BEING HOOKED."

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### Ringling Lawsuit

#### Court of Appeals Ruling

Washington, D.C. (October 28, 2011) — [Court of Appeals upholds Trial Court Ruling](#) (Acrobat PDF).

#### Trial Court Ruling

Washington, D.C. (December 31, 2009) — Katherine Meyer, lead attorney for the plaintiffs in *ASPCA, et al v Feld Entertainment, Inc* released the following statement on behalf of the plaintiffs regarding yesterday's ruling by Judge Emmet Sullivan of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

"After a nearly ten year legal battle against the Ringling Bros. Circus regarding its mistreatment of endangered Asian elephants, a federal judge yesterday dismissed the case on grounds that the plaintiffs lacked 'standing' to pursue their claims. Because he dismissed the case for a lack of jurisdiction, the Court did not address any of the extensive evidence presented at trial that showed Asian elephants kept on chains for much of their lives and hit with bull hooks, or the testimony of several renowned experts that these practices harm the elephants in many ways. The case focuses on elephant mistreatment under the Endangered Species Act. Had the Court addressed the merits of the case and ruled favorably for the plaintiffs, the Circus would have been required to stop its chaining and bull hook practices or obtain a special permit from the federal government to continue to engage in these practices."

The plaintiffs in the case include a former Ringling Bros. employee, The American Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Fund for Animals, and the Animal Protection Institute. The plaintiffs are weighing their options regarding further proceedings.

#### Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus On Trial

Born Free USA united with Animal Protection Institute (Born Free USA), along with three other animal protection organizations and a former Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus (Ringling) employee, sued Ringling for violating the Endangered Species Act by cruelly mistreating Asian elephants. The trial ended in March 2009.

The Asian elephant is currently listed as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), meaning that any act that would "harm, wound, injure, harass, or kill" an Asian elephant in the wild or in captivity are prohibited. The lawsuit alleged that a number of routine practices by Ringling are in violation of the Endangered Species Act, including the forceful use of a bullhook and the chaining of elephants for most of the day and night. We have amassed a wealth of evidence to support these claims.

#### Bullhook Use

A bullhook, or ankus, is made of wood, metal, or other substantial material. It is approximately 2 to 3 feet long, and at one end is a sharp steel hook and poker. It is used to poke, prod, strike, and hit animals to "train" them — all for a few moments of human amusement.



Bullhook Use

We have video footage of Ringling employees repeatedly hitting elephants with bullhooks, as well as video footage of the daily hitting and "hooking" of the elephants to make them stay in line, move in a particular direction, or perform on cue.

In addition, we have Ringling's [own internal written documents](#) that discuss the mistreatment of the elephants. For example, Ringling's animal behaviorist reported "an elephant dripping blood all over the arena floor during the show from being hooked." In an internal email, a Ringling veterinary assistant reported that "after this morning's baths, at least 4 of the elephants came in with multiple abrasions and lacerations from the hooks." After the release of this information to the public, Ringling moved to prohibit the release of any additional information to the public provided via discovery.

#### Chaining

Chaining is one of the most common methods used to confine elephants in captivity. It severely restricts an elephant's movements, eliminating its ability to lie down, walk, or socialize with other elephants. The events of these restrictions can result in neurotic psychological behavior, physical injury, and even the death of captive elephants.



Chaining

Newly obtained evidence based on the circus's own documents reveals that Ringling keeps elephants virtually immobilized in chains for the majority of their lives. Internal records show that the elephants are chained while confined in boxes for an average of more than 25 hours at a time, and sometimes for as much as 60-100 hours, as the circus moves across the country.

In addition, former Ringling employees testified about the mistreatment they witnessed while working for the circus, all of which corroborates the claims alleged in this case.

In addition to Born Free USA, the plaintiffs in the lawsuit are the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Animal Welfare Institute, the Fund for Animals, and Tom Rider, a former Ringling employee.

\* The lawsuit was heard before the Honorable Emmet J. Sullivan in federal district court in the District of Columbia and handled by Meyer Gittenstein & Crystal, one of the county's preeminent environmental law firms.

#### Next Trial Transcripts >

#### You Can Help

Please donate to the [Elephant Defense Fund](#) and help us continue our fight. With your support, we will do everything we can to end the mistreatment of elephants in circuses and traveling shows.

#### Watch More



2009 Ringling Bros. Trial

#### Get The Facts

- Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus
- The Endangered Species Act
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