

Bil Anifeiliaid Gwyllt a Sycrasau (Cymru) | Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill  
WA 02

**Ymateb gan :** Freedom for Animals

**Evidence from :** Freedom For Animals

Freedom for Animals is a UK-based charity, working to end the exploitation of animals for entertainment (registered 1124436). Established in 1957, FFA (previously the Captive Animals' Protection Society) has been working to end the use of animals in circuses for 60 years, alongside other NGOs and concerned members of the public. We have carried out investigation work, research, public outreach and political lobbying on this issue. We are pleased to support any restriction on the use of animals in circuses and support this Bill.

## 1. Why we support the Bill

1.1 All animals should be able to live their lives for their own purposes and have their needs met to the fullest extent possible. This is not possible in a circus environment. Animals used in travelling circuses inevitably live in temporary accommodation which is far removed from the environment which they have evolved to inhabit. Animals are transported on a regular basis in confined spaces for long periods. Animals are trained to perform stunts and tricks which serve no meaningful purpose to the animals themselves.

1.2 There is a long history of research, consultation and public engagement with the issue of animals in circuses. A case for a ban is strong and many countries worldwide have already banned animal circuses. England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland have recently banned the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. Public opinion is supportive of abolishing wild animal circuses - 95% of respondents to a consultation in England supported a ban, as well as 98% of respondents to a consultation in Scotland and more recently, 97% of respondents to a consultation in Wales.

1.3 Simply licensing animal circuses allows circuses to continue to exploit animals and does little to address their welfare needs. It does nothing to address the ethical concerns of keeping and using animals in a travelling circus environment.

1.4 The use of wild animals in circuses both demonstrates and perpetuates a lack of respect for animals. We believe that banning the use of wild animals in circuses can only serve to have a positive impact on the attitudes of children and adults alike towards animals. Children who see animals in these exploitative situations learn how animals behave in these artificial environments, which does

not reflect how they would behave naturally in the wild. This form of exploitation also teaches young people that using animals in this way is acceptable in society, a pastime which is largely opposed by the public.

1.5 The animal circus industry has a history of forceful control of animals and sometimes abuse which has been recorded on film on various occasions. For example the infamous case of Anne the elephant at Bobby Roberts circus. Occasionally such instances are witnessed in the circus ring such as training methods used to control the animals including the use of bullhooks or whips. We don't believe that viewing these practices would have a positive impact on young people's attitude towards animals or their well-being.

## 2. Ethical basis for the ban

2.1 As an animal protection organisation which has worked on the issue of animal circuses for 60 years, we have witnessed society's opinion changing towards animals and the ways they are used in entertainment. Whilst we experience a range of reactions to our different campaigns, the use of animals in circuses is always met with solid objections, on welfare grounds and for strongly held ethical reasons.

2.2 The Welsh Government's public consultation has shown the public's support of a ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. In our experience when campaigning, many people are surprised to hear that any circuses exist in the UK which use animals, seeing it as outdated to use animals in such a way.

2.3 We therefore welcome a ban based on ethical grounds, however also believe there are serious reasons for a ban on welfare grounds and refer to the report "The Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses". This extensive report concludes that the "evidence would support a ban.... on animal welfare grounds."

## 3. Definition of Wild animal

3.1 We agree with the proposed definition of a wild animal. However, in reference to subsection 2 (1) in the draft bill, we hold some concerns. Including the option to specify which animals are regarded as 'wild' or 'not wild', could be a useful and positive tool to clarify those species where some contention may exist over their status. For example, some may deem that camels are domesticated, as they are used as working animals in other countries, however they are not normally domesticated in the British Isles so would be classed as 'wild'. Subsection 2 (1) would allow this to be formally determined. However, we remain cautious as we do not wish to see this used as a way of allowing some wild species to continue to be used in circuses. The ban should cover all wild animal species without exception and we urge that any decisions made over defining the wild status of an animal be based on scientific opinion.

## 4. Scope of Bill

4.1 We would want to see the ‘use’ of wild animals to be extended beyond ‘performance’ and ‘exhibition’, to include circuses keeping wild animals within a travelling circus

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<sup>1</sup> “The Welfare of Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses”, Jo Dorning, Stephen Harris and Heather Pickett published April 2016

environment, even if not directly used as part of the circus business. This is because these animals will still be subjected to many of the welfare concerns around repeated transportation and temporary housing. It may also be difficult for an inspector to verify if an animal has been used in the circus directly or not in some cases, for example a temporary stable set up for a zebra grazing in a field.

4.2 It seems for some species it may be impossible for a circus to keep them completely off display. On approaching a circus with animals, it is usually fairly easy to see the animals as you can identify their living accommodation, which by design for larger animals usually has some open sections either for example a stable door, cage bars or animals grazing in a fenced off area.

4.3 There is a strong expectation from members of the public that we interact with, that animals will no longer be subjected to a circus environment once a ban is in place.

## 5. Retirement of animals

5.1 Further to point 4.3 above, many members of the public believe that wild animals in circuses will no longer be kept by circuses once the ban is in place. It is a major point of concern, as it was during the development of the ban in England, that the animals are properly retired and cared for. There should be a requirement for a retirement plan for each of the animals currently used in circuses in Wales.

5.2 We alongside other animal protection NGOs wish for the animals to be given up to sanctuaries to live out the rest of their days, and are willing to help find homes for them.

## 6. Powers of enforcement

6.1 If a circus is found to commit an offence, then there should be powers for the animals to be removed.

## 7. Date of enforcement

7.1 We are disappointed to see the date of enforcement set so far in the future. This ban is already long overdue, with the public, animal protection organisations and veterinary experts lobbying for many years to secure a ban.

The bans in place in Scotland and England have or will come into force long before the proposed date of the Welsh ban of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020. This will allow circuses with wild animals to travel in Wales for a whole year, despite the strong progress on developing this important legislation against something which many agree should no longer be allowed to take place. We urge the committee to fix a reasonable but much sooner date of enforcement, to prevent animals enduring many more months on the road.

## 8. Inclusion of domestic animals

8.1 We believe that there is much evidence to support a ban on the use of domestic animals in circuses as they suffer many of the same issues that wild animals do. They are still transported in and confined in restricted spaces for long periods of time on the backs of trailers and lorries.

8.2 The loading and unloading of animals like horses, is known to be one of the biggest stressors of transportation - in a travelling circus animals undergo this regularly.

8.3 They are housed in temporary accommodation which by its nature cannot provide the stability or standards which static accommodation can provide.

8.4 Stereotypic behaviours normally recognised in wild animals are seen in domestic animals in circuses also, such as head weaving and bobbing.

8.5 Watching animals performing circus tricks for entertainment teaches disrespect for animals, be they wild or domestic.

8.6 We understand that the previous consultations focused just on the use of wild animals but we believe there are strong grounds for domestic animals to be included in a ban. Whilst there may be some difference in public opinion between the use of wild and domestic animals in circuses, we find from our campaigning work that people do oppose the use of domestic animals in this way. Every year we support people who choose to campaign locally against the use of domestic animals in circuses including horses, cats, dogs and budgies. When speaking with the general public many of them state their opposition to all animals in circuses, not just wild. The ethical argument that making animals perform tricks is demeaning, the long hours on the road and the investigation work carried out by NGOs showing the housing of domestic animals in circuses, have led to these opinions. We urge the committee to take these opinions into account too.

## 8. Amendments relating to licensing of circuses

We agree with these amendments in section 8 (1) and (2).