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Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982.
Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal
Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.
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To all MSPs,

Dear Member of the Scottish Parliament,

On Thursday you have a chance to debate the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses
(Scotland) Bill.

I wrote to you in more detail about this in May of this year. You can read that e-mail on our
website here: <http://www.adviceaboutanimals.info/newsmayarticle1.html>

In my e-mail in May I suggested the Bill had been misnamed in that it is extremely difficult to
determine what constitutes a wild animal. Is a lion bred from stock which have been captive
for several generations truly a wild animal? A better description might be “exotic”, though in
the village I came from a sheep in a tutu would have been considered an exotic animal.
Perhaps the best description for what the Government is seeking would be “non-native
animals”?

As I predicted this has proved to be a bit of a problem causing discussions in Committee as
to what is meant by “Wild Animals”. I repeat my suggestion from May. Rename the Bill “The
Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill” and save all animals from a life cruelly
restricted by the obvious constraints of having to carry everything you need on vehicles
which spend perhaps nine months of the year criss-crossing the UK and Europe. As
someone who has kept dogs most of my life I will never forget seeing a troupe of Samoyed
dogs taken from a big top in Perth and transferred to their “home” – cages inside a
windowless box van.

Remove the arguments and debates by banning all animals from travelling circuses and you
liberate dogs from a cruel and totally unsuitable environment. Remember that even the very
best and caring travelling circus can only offer their animals a basic existence.

Although this Bill was prompted by an incident in 2014/15 where tigers and lions from a
circus were overwintered on an Aberdeenshire Croft I find it difficult to see how this Bill
would stop this happening again. I ask you to do all you can to amend and strengthen this
Bill to ensure that cannot happen again and that it gets onto the statute book as an
unambiguous, easily enforceable law to stop animals being exploited for a form of
entertainment which passed its sell-by date many decades ago.

There are calls to get this Bill through before Christmas. I would have thought it better to take the time to get it done properly and avoid a disaster such as the Dangerous Dogs Dinner of a Law or the law that fooled people into thinking fox hunting was banned.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,
Animal Concern Advice Line.

PS. Are you aware of the Welsh Government consultation on Mobile Animal Exhibits? This seeks to address the use of animals in circuses, travelling "mini zoos", raptor displays and use of reindeer in Christmas promotions. It would be very relevant to Scotland.

We need legislation to curb, control and police all the above activities and, had the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses (Scotland) Bill not been so advanced I would have suggested opening it up to encompass several associated areas of animal use and abuse which are in dire need of political attention. See for instance the story on the link below:

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/obsessed-pet-collector-jailed-neglecting-10697521>