

Dear Oregon House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am an Oregon resident writing to express my support for HB 3214.

Traveling animal acts using wild or exotic animals cannot possibly meet the animals' basic physical needs of natural habitat, light, ventilation, temperature, and adequate space for movement and exercise, or their psychological and behavior needs. In addition, wild or exotic animals in proximity to the public are a public health and safety issue. They can also readily expose the public to zoonotic diseases. According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **six out of every 10 infectious diseases in people are zoonotic**. The CDC has listed the zoonotic diseases of most concern in the US as follows:

- Zoonotic influenza
- Salmonellosis
- West Nile Virus
- Bubonic Plague
- Emerging coronaviruses (e.g., SARS, MERS)
- Rabies
- Brucellosis
- Lyme Disease

In addition to the diseases listed above, elephants are common carriers of tuberculosis and often exhibit no signs or symptoms of the disease. A 2015 Philadelphia (*UniverSoul*) circus event **featured three elephants who were barred from performing by New York City and the city of Dallas, citing concerns regarding positive tuberculosis testing**. (NYC also barred their tiger act, citing inadequate caging.) While these same elephants were performing in Philadelphia, *UniverSoul Circus* took legal action against Dallas over its decision to bar them and the judge sided with the city health officials. **Despite increasing concern regarding the issue of tuberculosis in captive elephants, the USDA subsequently announced it would no longer require annual tuberculosis blood tests, contrary to USAHA recommendations.**

From the *National Association of Public Health Veterinarians*:

- **No US federal laws address pathogen transmission risk at venues where the public has contact with animals...**
- **Direct contact with dangerous animals (nonhuman primates, certain carnivores) should be completely prohibited. ...**
- **Certain domestic, exotic, or wild animals should be prohibited from exhibition settings where a reasonable possibility of animal contact exists, especially nonhuman primates and certain carnivores**

The 2020 Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics described the **"most important reservoirs of pathogens with pandemic potential are mammals"**, citing primates and camels particularly.

Concerning public safety, there are numerous documented instances of animals escaping from temporary cages or enclosures or from a handler's control. People have been bitten, mauled, and even killed by wild or exotic animals who are constantly exposed to stressful situations and unnatural and unfamiliar surroundings.

In 1994, an elephant named Tyke killed a trainer and stomped on and injured another person shortly before a performance with Circus International in Honolulu, Hawaii. Tyke then ran amok, breaking out of the arena and leading police on a chase through several city blocks. Tyke was shot and killed by police, taking a total of 87 shots to bring her down. One hour after the initial shots were fired, a bloodied 21-year-old Tyke was pronounced dead before a crowd of police, TV cameras, and hysterical onlookers. Ambulance officials described a scene of "total panic" as circusgoers fled from the arena, pushing and trampling each other. Fourteen people were transported by ambulance to the hospital and others drove themselves. Multiple lawsuits were filed.

In 1992 in Palm Bay, Florida, an elephant named Janet with the Great American Circus went on a rampage while giving rides to five children and one adult. Janet ran out of the tent with the people still on her back and charged through the circus grounds. She threw two circus workers about 20 feet into the air, rammed a tractor-trailer, picked up a police officer who tried to rescue the riders and threw him, then picked him up again and tried to step on him. Hundreds of circusgoers panicked and fled screaming. Police fired 43 shots at Janet but were unable to kill her until they used armor-piercing bullets. Twelve people, including the trainer, were treated at a hospital for injuries.

Here are a few more examples of incidents involving wild animals in traveling shows in the United States that have resulted in injuries to the general public:

2018 – Pennsylvania: Several children fell off a camel while giving rides at a Shrine Circus, breaking one child's arm. An adult passenger dangled precariously from the animal's carriage when the camel started bucking and running amok.

2017 – Massachusetts: A capuchin monkey in a petting zoo at the Brockton Fair bit an 18-year-old girl while she was feeding the animal.

2015 – Georgia: A lemur escaped from a cage at a county fair and bit two bystanders.

2014 – Missouri: Three elephants with a Shrine Circus escaped from handlers, pushed through a door, bolted into the parking lot, and damaged two cars.

2014 – Missouri: A bear cub used in a traveling petting zoo nipped eighteen students at Washington University.

2013 – Kansas: A woman attending the Shrine Circus encountered a tiger, who had escaped during the show, in the bathroom.

2009 – Indiana: At least a dozen children and one adult were injured when an elephant giving rides at the Murat Shrine Circus knocked over the scaffolding stairway leading to the elephant ride.

2007 – Georgia: A baboon bit a 17-month-old boy at the Columbia County Fair.

2006 - New York: An adult tiger clawed a 4-year-old boy at the Saratoga County Fair.

2004 – Indiana: An ambulance was called to the Hadi Shrine Circus after a circusgoer was bitten on the cheek by a chimpanzee while posing for pictures with the animal. The patron was treated for a puncture wound.

2004 - New York: A tiger bolted from the New Cole Bros. Circus in Queens. Dozens of police officers pursued the tiger for 30 minutes as he prowled for a mile through a park crowded with picnickers, scattering screaming people and causing two traffic accidents.

2004 – Texas: An elephant with a Shrine Circus attacked an arena worker following a performance. The elephant knocked the man down, threw him into a wall, and pinned him against a fence, resulting in more than \$16,000 in medical bills.

2003 – Florida: A tiger traveling with UniverSoul Circus escaped while the cage was being cleaned. The tiger climbed over a car, jumped over a fence, headed down an alley, and frightened employees at a nearby restaurant.

1997 – Michigan: A muzzled and caged bear with the Shrine Circus bit off the tip of a 2-year-old child's finger.

1997 – Pennsylvania: A 400-pound tiger used in the Franzen Bros. Circus killed 50-year-old trainer Wayne Franzen in front of 200 horrified schoolchildren. The tiger pounced on him when he turned his back, grabbed him by the neck, and dragged him around the circus ring.

1993 – Arkansas: A tiger performing with the Shrine Circus escaped, ran into the audience, and bit a 13- year-old girl.

1991 - North Carolina: A 3-year-old girl required stitches after she was attacked by a leopard traveling with the Great American Circus.

1990 – Oregon: Two leashed and collared chimpanzees went out of control during a Circus Gatti performance. They dragged the trainer into the stands and pulled a child from her seat and onto the arena floor, then mauled her.

Clearly, traveling animal acts that use exotic or wild animals present a danger to the public and to the animals themselves. **Banning wild and exotic traveling animal acts altogether is cleaner,**

less costly, and more easily enforced than the current, costly, admittedly problematic and ineffective regulatory oversight. As it stands, reported violations often devolve into expensive 'battles of the experts' over the question or level of harm, even where illegal acts may be documented. These battles are expensive for both the taxpayers and the industry, much more so than simple, objective determinations as to whether a prohibited animal may be present.

I strongly urge you to support HB 3214.

Respectfully Yours,

Richard Weber
Portland, Oregon