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Initial summary of responses to the Defra public consultation exercise on the use of Wild Animals in Circuses

March 2010

Introduction

This document provides a preliminary analysis of responses to Defra's public consultation exercise on the use of wild animals in circuses. It analyses 10,576 responses.

Background to the public consultation exercise

Defra's public consultation exercise on the use of wild animals in circuses was launched on 21 December 2009. It ran for a period of 12 weeks, and it closed on 15 March 2010.

We consulted on 3 possible options which could safeguard the welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses:-

- a complete ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses.
- a voluntary system self-regulating the use of wild animals in travelling circuses.
- a statutory system regulating the use of wild animals in circuses.

We did not consult on the option of maintaining the status quo, as animal welfare organisations and the circus industry had agreed that 'business as usual' was not an option.

As animal welfare is a devolved matter, the consultation applied to wild animals in travelling circuses in England only.

To make it easier for people to submit their comments, respondents could submit their views using a range of options:-

- completing an on-line questionnaire.
- emailing comments to a shared mailbox.
- sending comments by post.

Number of responses received

Responses were received from a large volume of individuals and a range of organisations. The majority of responses was from individual members of the public, but responses were received from a range of organisations – including circus, animal welfare, veterinary, zoological, and local authority organisations.

A total of 10,576 responses have been received and recorded. This figure is comprised of:-

- 9,390 electronic responses to the on-line questionnaire.
- 1,186 emails to the shared mailbox and comments received by post - this figure includes 712 hard-copy responses to the on-line questionnaire (blank copies printed out, and then completed in manuscript).

In addition to the 10,576 responses recorded, we received 2,331 postcards we have not yet been able to record (making a total of 12,907 responses received). These postcards were part of a campaign organised by an animal welfare organisation, and

consist of 13 questions based on some of the questions in the on-line questionnaire. As these postcards have not been recorded yet, they are not included in the data below (it should be possible to include them in the full summary of responses to be prepared in due course).

Statistical summary of the responses

This section provides a statistical summary of the answers to the questions asked in the consultation exercise. Since this is a high-level analysis only, we have not analysed comments written in the free-text boxes in the on-line questionnaire (an analysis of the free-text boxes in the on-line questionnaire will be included in the full summary of responses to be prepared in due course).

The statistics in this section are based on the 10,576 responses recorded, rather than the total of 12,907 responses received (this equates to 82% of the responses received).

As 9,390 of the 10,576 recorded responses (i.e. 89%) were electronic responses to the on-line questionnaire, the statistics in this section have been produced to reflect the answer options provided in the on-line questionnaire. The 1,186 emails to the shared mailbox and comments received by post have been matched as closely as possible to the answer options provided in the on-line questionnaire. Where people who either sent an email to the shared mailbox or sent a letter in the post did not provide an answer to a question in the on-line questionnaire, this has been logged as 'left blank' against the relevant question. Where people who sent a hard-copy response to the on-line questionnaire (blank copies printed out, and then completed in manuscript) did not answer every question, this has been logged as 'not answered' against the relevant question. In addition, we were not able to fully record 81 of the 712 hard-copy responses to the on-line questionnaire and 60 postcards at the time of preparing this document (although this will be done in order to produce the full summary of responses to be prepared in due course).

The percentage figures in this section have been calculated using the number of responses to each question recorded at the time of preparing this document, and they have been calculated using substantive responses only (i.e. ignoring 'left blank' or 'not answered' entries) so that we only include those who expressed an opinion. As the percentage figures have been rounded to the nearest half percentage point, they may not always total 100% for each question. The figures in brackets show the number of people answering that option out of the total number of recorded substantive answers to that question.

1. Do you think that there are any species of wild animal which it is acceptable to use in travelling circuses?

Don't know	1%	(85 out of 9920 responses)
No	95.5%	(9463 out of 9920 responses)
Yes	4%	(372 out of 9920 responses)

2. Do you think that a ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses is the best option to achieve consistently better welfare standards for such animals?

Yes	94.5%	(9532 out of 10105 responses)
No	4.5%	(474 out of 10105 responses)
Don't know	1%	(99 out of 10105 responses)

3. If a complete ban were introduced, how much time do you think travelling circuses should be given to stop using their wild animals?

None	21.5%	(2052 out of 9627 responses)
1 month	12%	(1176 out of 9627 responses)
3 months	15%	(1462 out of 9627 responses)
6 months	24%	(2295 out of 9627 responses)
1 year	11%	(1067 out of 9627 responses)
Until animal is unfit to be used	2.5%	(233 out of 9627 responses)
Don't know	2%	(196 out of 9627 responses)
Other	12%	(1146 out of 9627 responses)

4. If a complete ban were introduced, what do you think should happen to the animals at the time the ban becomes effective?

Animals should stay with circuses at their private premises	2.5%	(233 out of 9636 responses)
Animals should be re-homed (for example, to a zoo or sanctuary)	84%	(8087 out of 9636 responses)
Animals should be euthanased	0.5%	(37 out of 9636 responses)
Other	13.5%	(1279 out of 9636 responses)

5. Do you think that travelling circuses should be prevented from obtaining any further wild animals?

Yes	96%	(9239 out of 9618 responses)
No	3.5%	(329 out of 9618 responses)
Don't know	0.5%	(50 out of 9618 responses)

6. If a complete ban were introduced, how often do you think travelling circuses should be inspected to ensure compliance?

Every location	58.5%	(5543 out of 9445 responses)
Every month	9.5%	(898 out of 9445 responses)
Every 3 months	11.5%	(1099 out of 9445 responses)
Every 6 months	8.5%	(794 out of 9445 responses)
Every year	4%	(391 out of 9445 responses)
Don't know	2%	(168 out of 9445 responses)

Other 6% (552 out of 9445 responses)

7. How do you think a complete ban on wild animals might affect the revenue of the travelling circuses affected?

No change 40% (3779 out of 9462 responses)
Increase 25.5% (2418 out of 9462 responses)
Decrease 16.5% (1541 out of 9462 responses)
Don't know 18% (1724 out of 9462 responses)

8. Do you think that wild animals from travelling circuses have skills which make them more suitable than other animals for work in the audiovisual industry?

Yes 10% (930 out of 9454 responses)
No 71.5% (6783 out of 9454 responses)
Don't know 18.5% (1741 out of 9454 responses)

9. Do you think that a complete ban on wild animals in travelling circuses could have an impact on other industries?

Yes 19% (1773 out of 9436 responses)
No 67% (6322 out of 9436 responses)
Don't know 14% (1341 out of 9436 responses)

10. Do you think that travelling circus employees undergoing training would be an appropriate measure to help raise the standard of welfare of wild animals in circuses?

Yes 24.5% (2328 out of 9448 responses)
No 68.5% (6452 out of 9448 responses)
Don't know 7% (668 out of 9448 responses)

11. Do you think that travelling circus owners should have to produce, on demand, veterinary records for the wild animals performing in their circus?

Yes 97% (9042 out of 9306 responses)
No 1.5% (137 out of 9306 responses)
Don't know 1.5% (127 out of 9306 responses)

12. Do you think that visits from an appropriately trained inspector would safeguard the welfare for wild animals in travelling circuses?

Yes 29.5% (2758 out of 9311 responses)
No 63% (5854 out of 9311 responses)

Don't know 7.5% (699 out of 9311 responses)

13. If visits were required, what should be the minimum circus inspection frequency per year?

Every location	65%	(6031 out of 9308 responses)
Every month	13%	(1202 out of 9308 responses)
Every 3 months	11%	(1017 out of 9308 responses)
Every 6 months	5.5%	(499 out of 9308 responses)
Every year	1.5%	(149 out of 9308 responses)
Don't know	4.5%	(410 out of 9308 responses)

14. Do you think that inspectors should undertake unannounced inspections of travelling circuses?

Yes	96.5%	(8999 out of 9316 responses)
No	2.5%	(221 out of 9316 responses)
Don't know	1%	(96 out of 9316 responses)

15. Do you think that a code of practice for keeping wild animals in travelling circuses could effectively safeguard their welfare? If yes, who do you think should write such a code?

No one	34%	(3746 out of 11043 responses)
Defra	12.5%	(1376 out of 11043 responses)
Circuses	2%	(237 out of 11043 responses)
Welfare organisations	26.5%	(2926 out of 11043 responses)
Other	25%	(2758 out of 11043 responses)

Please note that there are more responses to this question as the on-line questionnaire allowed people to answer more than one option.

16. Do you think that the hours and the environment in which animals travel should be restricted?

Don't know	16%	(1434 out of 8968 responses)
No	4.5%	(405 out of 8968 responses)
Yes	79.5%	(7129 out of 8968 responses)

17. Do you think that circuses themselves are best placed to regulate welfare standards for wild animals in travelling circuses?

Yes	3.5%	(308 out of 9087 responses)
No	93.5%	(8518 out of 9087 responses)
Don't know	3%	(261 out of 9087 responses)

18. If self-regulation is supported, should a regulatory body be accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service or an equivalent body?

United Kingdom Accreditation Service	35%	(2946 out of 8420 responses)
Don't know	39%	(3288 out of 8420 responses)
Equivalent	26%	(2186 out of 8420 responses)

19. Do you think the use of no more than 50 wild animals in travelling circuses merits action?

Don't know	18%	(1619 out of 8989 responses)
No	12.5%	(1117 out of 8989 responses)
Yes	69.5%	(6253 out of 8989 responses)

20. Do you think that there is an existing body that is appropriate to enforce any regulations on the use of wild animals in circuses?

Don't know	33%	(2947 out of 8984 responses)
No	46.5%	(4180 out of 8984 responses)
Yes	20.5%	(1857 out of 8984 responses)

Summary of main views expressed

This section is divided into two distinct parts.

The first part of this section summarises the views of letters and emails mainly written by individual people (as opposed to key national/international organisations, which are dealt with in the second part of this section below).

The main reasons such people provided for requesting a ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses were:-

- the poor conditions in which such animals are transported.
- such animals should not be kept in such an unnatural environment (e.g. cages).
- the cruel methods used to train such animals.
- it is unethical/immoral to use such animals to entertain humans in 21st century Britain.
- it is unnatural for such animals to be made to perform tricks.
- the use of such animals in circuses provides no educational benefit.
- other circuses are successful without using such animals.
- banning such animals is the only feasible option, as regulations would be unenforceable.
- there is already sufficient evidence (e.g. videos, photographs, research, and press articles) that the use of such animals in circuses is cruel and should be banned.

- it is time for the Government in this country to take action to prevent any further suffering to such animals, especially as other countries (e.g. Bolivia and Greece) have already banned the use of such animals.

The main reasons such people provided for supporting the use of wild animals in travelling circuses were:-

- such animals are looked after well by their keepers.
- the trainers treat such animals carefully.
- such animals are rewarded with treats when they perform tricks.
- such animals are saved from predators in the wild.
- the use of such animals in circuses is a tradition, and it should be preserved.
- the use of such animals in circuses is entertaining and educational.
- circuses give such animals a purpose to live.
- a ban on the use of such animals would affect circuses materially (financially) and emotionally.
- tricks performed by such animals reflect natural behaviour in the wild.

The second part of this section summarises the views of letters and emails written by key national/international organisations.

The responses received from the main representatives of the circus industry showed unanimous opposition to option 1 (a complete ban on wild animals in travelling circuses), as well as opposition to option 2 (voluntary self-regulation). The main representatives of the circus industry supported option 3 (compulsory statutory regulation). These respondents suggested that no evidence has been produced to suggest that the travelling circus environment is detrimental to an animal's welfare. One response said that it would also be stressful to remove from a circus an animal that had been born and bred in that environment. Respondents felt any species of animal could be used in a travelling circus, although one response commented that some aquatic species were not suitable for use due to their environmental needs. Respondents felt that any animals covered by the ban should be allowed to remain with their owners so long as the owner was not in breach of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Respondents also felt that a ban would impact on other industries. As well as the audio visual industry, industries that provide equipment (such as transporters) were mentioned as being impacted.

Responses received from the main animal welfare interests showed unanimous support for option 1 (a complete ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses). All these respondents stated that the welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses was compromised by the travelling circus environment, and that a ban was the only option to achieve consistent welfare standards. None supported statutory regulation or self-regulation. In the event of a ban, most respondents felt that circuses should be given 6 months to re-home all wild animals, although others felt that less time should be allowed. All respondents felt that the animals should be re-homed. All preferred re-homing in a specialist sanctuary in preference to a zoo, and only when a sanctuary was not available should a high-quality zoo be considered. One respondent felt that if re-homing for an animal was not an option it should be humanely euthanased. Another respondent felt that if re-homing wasn't compulsory then owners should agree a plan for the future care, or re-homing and care up to the point of re-homing, of all prohibited animals. Respondents felt that there should be

inspections to ensure that a ban was being complied with, with most suggesting that inspections should happen at every new location, while others suggested inspections at least once or twice a season. None of the main animal welfare respondents felt that a ban would impact on other industries.

The one response received from representatives of the veterinary profession supported option 1 (a complete ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses). They also felt that animals should stop being used in circuses as soon as any legislation came into force, and circuses should be inspected biannually (at least once while travelling) to ensure compliance. Any animals covered by a ban should be kept in static accommodation with an owner who must fulfil all requirements laid out within the Zoo Licensing Act 1981, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976 and the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

The one response received from representatives of zoos also supported a phased-in ban on the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. They opposed voluntary self-regulation, and felt that a ban would not impact on other industries.

Responses were also received from local authority organisations. One stated that local authorities were not best placed to regulate the use of wild animals in travelling circuses, and that a Primary Authority Scheme (as described in option 3) would also not work (a Primary Authority Scheme would allow circuses to register with one local authority, who would then be responsible for issuing a licence for keeping wild animals, subject to regular inspections). They felt that any regulation would be better delivered by a national body (i.e. Animal Health or the Zoo Licensing Authority). One supported the Primary Authority Scheme. They felt that this would mean that the local authority which acts as home authority for a circus should be able to claim costs of inspection.

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