

# HUMANE REVIEW

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NEW YORK STATE HUMANE ASSOCIATION



## The Circus – A Nightmare For Animals

Once again, Albany played host to the annual dreary migration of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus as it forced its performing animals to entertain the crowds for a three-day engagement in May. Again, the elephants were prodded as they marched from their unloading site to the Times Union arena along downtown streets -- a far cry from the migrating marches of the family-based elephant herds in Africa who have the good fortune to live their natural lives in the satisfaction of their physical, psychological, and emotional needs.

All circus animals endure lives that are stressful and often cruel, depending on the species. The domesticated animal acts using dogs and horses are easier for the performers to bear since they are at least familiar with and responsive to humans after millennia of domestication (though even these animals often lack proper veterinary care and suffer from confinement). The wild animals fare the worst, and elephants top the list in the inherent cruelty that circus animals experience, simply because their size makes transport and housing so confining and unnatural for them. Their training protocols are geared to ensure that the public will never see the underlying abuse, and therefore circus owners remain assured of their wide profit margin after each city stopover.

Elephants evince some of the most obvious physical damage seen in animal performers if the spectator knows what to look for -- the wounds along the lower limbs and near the eyes and ears from sharp stabbings by the bull-hook or "ankus", in very sensitive areas; perhaps the weight loss

of chronic disease, including tuberculosis, which has been diagnosed in most traveling circuses during their histories; and certainly the "stereotypes", which are the purposeless and repetitive movements that are proof of psychosis. The spectator might also note lameness and arthritis, and will certainly note the chains -- fore and aft (i.e. attached to two limbs) -- which the elephant wears for twenty-three out of

twenty-four hours daily. This style of incarceration and immobilization, as well as the abusive nature of their training and conditioning creates mental illness in this species, which has evolved to live in complex social units and to have an intelligence known for its problem-solving and creative abilities.



*Circus elephants endure much abuse learning "entertaining" tricks.*

It is the training of the future elephant performers that is most heartbreaking: obviously, the circus requires animal performers that will never exercise independent thought and refuse to perform. Equally obviously, the elephants who may weigh five to six tons at maturity must be so highly obedient that the humans working with them in a show are completely safe from their acting out in aggression or frustration against their handlers or the audience. Thankfully, there have been a few brave trainers who have turned informant since they could no longer be complicit in hiding brutal cruelty, and the videos and images they have released to the public are very distressing. Not only do the trainers freely beat their charges, they state explicitly that they know they cannot abuse them "on the road" (i.e. in the public's sight) so their training sessions are

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## President's Message

Recently, several of us from NYSHA's Board of Directors attended a tragically enlightening seminar sponsored by Equine Advocates, an amazing rescue and education center in Chatham, Columbia County.

The focus was on horse slaughter – both about how it is so inhumanely accomplished, and preventing it from happening in the United States again. The issue is quite complex, and for complete information, their website ([www.equineadvocates.org](http://www.equineadvocates.org)) is a great resource. Part of the emphasis was on how horses provided the foundation for growth in this country. They served us in war, transportation, farming, industry, and the postal service, to name just a few of their functions.

Yet now we have repaid them by making them a disposable commodity, especially in the racing world. But how many people ever think about this when at the racetracks or at horse shows? Even when horses break down, there is the inevitable acceptance that it's just part of the sport.

Animals in entertainment of any kind face terrible challenges. As a child, I never wondered what happened to the animals at a petting zoo, the Catskill Game Farm, or a circus – either in their daily lives or when they outlived their usefulness. And I LOVED animals! Why didn't I think about that?

Our challenge in the humane community is to make people think about it. My classroom has pictures of elephants being whipped at a circus, of my donkeys who were rescued just before they were almost sent to their fifth home in under three years (a roadside zoo), of a diving mule terrified of jumping. In Animal Club we talk about these issues; the children are astounded, and besides refusing to attend these events, they write letters to change laws about what is acceptable in "entertainment."

We all need to protest and speak up to enlighten the general public about these issues. Most of the population in this country does not support horse slaughter, but is not vocal enough to stop it. The belief in doing the right thing in this and many other cases of animal abuse must somehow be channeled into publicizing it and making the changes necessary.

A few weeks after attending the workshop, my horse Honey became very sick and needed to be euthanized within the day. It was devastating. There is the consolation that she died surrounded by family, love, and kindness – not the horror experienced by hundreds of thousands of horses each year.

Living with a horse or any animal is an honor and a privilege. Animals in entertainment experience the same fears, joys, and needs as those in our homes or barns, but as a society we don't seem to make the connection. It's time we did.

As always, for the animals, Laura-Ann Cammisa

In memory of Honey. Rest in peace. You will always be loved and remembered.

## NYSHA's Calendar

**Investigating Animal Cruelty workshop** – Tuesday, July 31, in Binghamton, co-sponsored by the Broome Co. Sheriff's Office. Please check our website - [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org) - for more information and a registration form.

**Investigating Animal Cruelty workshop** – Please watch for information on NYSHA's website – [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org) – for fall workshop, which is tentatively planned to be held at the NYS Police Academy in Albany.

**Animal Advocacy Day** – June 13 in Albany at The Well of the Legislative Office Building. NYSHA's website has a link to more information for this inspiring day.

**Please visit us on our new Facebook Page - New York State Humane Association. We hope you "like" us.**

[nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org)

## Dear Friends of NYSHA:

In addition to sending you our newsletter, we would like to keep in touch with you by occasional emails on timely topics – legislative alerts, for example. If you would like to be added to our email list or update an email address we already have, [please use the email address line on the enclosed card.](#) While we are very grateful for donations, please feel free to return the card with or without a donation. And, we promise you we will not inundate you with emails or give your email address to any other organization.

Thank you.

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## Matching Grants

Have you checked to see if your workplace matches employee's donations to qualified organizations? If not sure, please ask your employer. You may be able to double your donation to NYSHA.

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[nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org)

## NYSHA Workshop Brings Together A Variety Of Attendees

NYSHA's "Investigating Animal Cruelty" workshop, held on April 19, was once again an exciting event bringing together Onondaga Co. Sheriff's deputies, Syracuse police officers, area SPCA representatives, NYS Troopers, along with an Under-sheriff and an area Deputy Mayor. NYSHA was also pleased to see a representative from Child Protective Services who wanted to learn more about the "Connection," as well as how to recognize the signs of animal cruelty that might point to possible child neglect or abuse.

All gathered in the Onondaga Co. Sheriff's facility in Syracuse for the workshop. Because the size of the group exceeded the size of the intended classroom, Deputy Amy Bollinger had to quickly transfer the participants to a larger training room. NYSHA presenters included retired BCI Investigator Sue McDonough, DCJS Instructor Andrea Stene, Harry Hovel, Ph.D, and Holly Cheever, DVM. We were also fortunate to have had the participation of Assistant District Attorney Laura Fiorenza from the Onondaga Co. DA's Office who delivered a great presentation on how to "work a case," so that she would be in the best position possible to deal with an arrested animal abuser. The workshop received excellent evaluations, and attendees requested additional training.



*NYS Trooper Kevin Connors with NYSHA's Dr. Harry Hovel, who presented on the "Connection."*

Our next workshop is scheduled for Tuesday, July 31, in Binghamton, co-hosted by the Broome Co. Sheriff's Office. We are working on a fall workshop at the NYS Police Academy in Albany. As plans firm up, information will be posted on the NYSHA website, [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org).

## Legislation Report

NYSHA was pleased to co-sponsor Humane Lobby Day on April 18 with The Humane Society of the United States, Farm Sanctuary, and Humane Society of New York. After a general session about lobbying on behalf of animals, the many advocates who attended proceeded to pre-arranged appointments with their legislators to discuss the bills on the following issues:

(1) Prohibition of possession of animal fighting paraphernalia with the intent of using it in violation of the animal fighting statutes (AM McEneny, Sen. Ritchie sponsors); (2) Prohibition of canned hunts or taking of exotic wildlife in enclosures (AM Glick, Sen. Krueger); (3) Prohibition of some forms of confinement of certain farm animals (AM Rosenthal); (4) Prohibition of the sale, possession, etc. of shark fins (AM Maisel, Sen. Grisanti).

Thanks to our website ([nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org)) and our Facebook Page, more timely information about animal-related bills is

available than via a print medium such as this newsletter. This is especially true of the current issue of *Humane Review*, which is being sent to the printer a few weeks before the end of the 2012 legislative session, as well as before a second important humane lobby day, *Animal Advocacy Day* (June 13), takes place.



*NYSHA's Legislation Chair, Samantha Mullen, with The HSUS's Patrick Kwan and Dora Schomberg at Humane Lobby Day*

As this article is being printed, one of the animal protection bills NYSHA believes has the best chance of passage this session is A9552-A (McEneny)/S6774-A (Ritchie). This bill, which NYSHA was instrumental in getting introduced, would ban the possession of animal fighting paraphernalia with the intent to use it in violation of New York's existing animal fighting statutes. There are many other fine bills NYSHA and other animal advocacy organizations have been working on, but the reality is that, with all the issues vying for legislators' attention, it is an enormous challenge to push through animal bills. Please check our website for updates.

their one chance to ensure complete obedience, based on the elephants' fear of painful beatings and electroshocks.

The saddest images available through the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals' website show the very young babies taken from their mothers early so that they can learn the fear of humans and the pain that human handlers can inflict at a very early age, while our species is still able to dominate them ("Elephants in Circuses: Training and Tragedy".) They are shackled and shocked, stabbed with the ankus' sharp tip, spread-eagled on the ground to learn how helpless they are, forced to sit on tubs and do headstands—essentially to perform all the unnatural and uncomfortable tricks they will be forced to display as adult performers, or suffer excruciating pain. All this abuse delivers the desired final product -- an animal too frightened and psychologically crushed to do anything but obey, so that the public is duped to think that their

performances are fun for all. But the public will never see this except in those instances that occur periodically when an elephant cannot take it anymore and lashes out in rage. Their typical target is their trainer. The elephant invariably is shot to death as a public danger, paying with his or her life for his/her sad life of daily abuse.

Unfortunately, the public has little opportunity to witness and report the elephants' mistreatment that violates state anti-cruelty laws. The best that advocates can do is to write letters to the editor detailing the animal abuse in these shows, and to ask all their friends to support the many fine circus companies using only human performers that still "razzle-dazzle" their audience. Do not expect much help from the veterinarians who work for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and are charged with inspecting traveling animal shows -- the USDA has far too meager a budget to have sufficient veterinary inspectors for an entertainment venue, and even though the federal Animal Welfare Act has a clause stating that any management system causing stereotypical behavior is inherently cruel, the presence of these behaviors in 100% of circuses has never once been cited as a charge of cruelty.

**What You Can Do:**

- Boycott circuses that use animals. Educate your friends and encourage them not to attend them.
- Support the wonderful circuses that use only human performers. Ask your local circus sponsor to arrange for one of these instead of one that uses animals. See [nyshumane.org](http://nyshumane.org) for a list.
- Write letters to your newspaper editor detailing animal abuse in circuses.



*Harsh and frightening training methods being used on a baby elephant. Photo courtesy PETA.*

## Sampling Of Well-Known Cruelty-Free Circuses

*(See NYSHA website for a complete list.)*

Bindlestiff Family Circus  
PO Box 1917  
New York, NY 10009  
(877)-BINDLES  
[cirkus@bindlestiff.org](mailto:cirkus@bindlestiff.org)

Cirque du Soleil  
1217 Notre-Dame St. E.  
Montreal, Quebec  
[\(800\) 678-2119](tel:(800)678-2119)

Circus Smirkus  
1 Circus Rd.  
Greensboro, VT 05841  
[\(802\) 533-7443](tel:(802)533-7443)  
[info@smirkus.org](mailto:info@smirkus.org)

The New Pickle Circus  
Circus Center  
755 Frederick St.  
San Francisco, CA 94117  
[\(415\) 759-8123](tel:(415)759-8123)

### Your Will Can Be Your Way...

Your will can be your way to continue helping animals after your lifetime. We are grateful that many of you have given NYSHA generous donations. If you also wish to remember NYSHA in your will, please ask your attorney to specify our official name and address as follows: New York State Humane Association, Inc., PO Box 3068, Kingston, NY 12402 • Federal ID Number 22-2238112