

## EYE ON THE NEWS

# UK Poised To Remove Big Cats From Circuses



From the smallest of monkeys and dogs right up to full-grown bears and elephants, “performing” animals have been a part of circuses since the heyday of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, few circus-goers neither knew nor cared about what it took to get the animals to “entertain” them.

While there were certainly some trainers who used both carrot and stick techniques to teach unnatural behaviors to animals, the stick method was all too common, and outright cruelty was employed a great deal of the time. Not to mention the inherent cruelty in keeping a wild animal in captivity in the first place.

One of the mainstays of most circuses of any size has always been the big cat show. From the stereotypical macho man with a whip and a chair right up to superstars like

Siegfried and Roy, who live with, pamper, and purportedly love their enormous feline co-stars, lions and tigers have been a favorite showstopper for centuries.

That is why it is such a pleasant surprise to learn that in Britain, as of

last month, big cats will no longer be featured in circuses. Animal rights campaigners are hoping this signals the end of using any wild animal in UK circuses.

The Labour government of several years ago promised to outlaw the use of big cats; now, the coalition government of Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have fulfilled their predecessors’ pledge, although the legislation has not yet gone through Parliament.

The RSPCA, which has long fought to prohibit animals from circuses, has scientific research showing that circus life has a harmful effect on many species.

Happily, recent trends in circuses favor artistic human acts, Cirque du Soleil being a prime example. **Humans have the right to express themselves with acrobatics or in any other fashion. We do not have the right to force non-humans to do so.** Let’s hope the big cat ban in the UK will inspire similar action in other nations, including the U.S.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/feb/10/circuses-remove-big-cats>