

Bil Anifeiliaid Gwyllt a Sycrasau (Cymru) | Wild Animals and Circuses (Wales) Bill  
WA 24

**Ymateb gan :** Thomas Chipperfield

**Evidence from :** Thomas Chipperfield

As a trainer of big cats who has previously worked under the Wild Animals in Travelling Circuses Regulations 2012 and am soon to be submitting my application for a licence under the above regulations, I wish for this attachment to serve as my written evidence submission to the call for written evidence as part of the proposed ban on the above activity in England on ethical grounds.

I would like to start by declaring my opposition to this bill. As the British Government has said, a ban on welfare grounds isn't supported by the available data, which includes Defra's own research (see Radford Report 2007[1]), as well as that by Dr. Marthe Kiley-Worthington in her report which was commissioned by the RSPCA[2], Prof. Ted Friend of Texas A&M University's work on stereotypical behaviour in circus animals and their transportation[3], and Dr Immanuel Birmelin's study of the effects of travelling on non-domesticated animals in the circus[4], the idea that ethics are separate to wellbeing is problematic, on the basis that wellbeing is the most accurate way to gauge morality. Neuroscientist and philosopher, Sam Harris, in his book, *The Moral Landscape: How Science can determine Human Values*, argues against the notion that the two do not overlap.

"The moment one begins thinking about morality in terms of well-being, it becomes remarkably easy to discern a moral hierarchy across human societies."

"Meaning, values, morality, and the good life must relate to facts about the well-being of conscious creatures—and, in our case, must lawfully depend upon events in the world and upon states of the human brain. Rational, open-ended, honest inquiry has always been the true source of insight into such processes."[5]

In her book, *Animals in Circuses And Zoos: Chiron's World?*, Kiley-Worthington addresses the arguments made by the various Members of Parliament regarding the value of, public perception and dignity of wild animals in travelling circuses.

Regarding conservation/education:

"Circuses could have an important role to play here, particularly in relation to the elephants and some of the threatened big cats. I see this role not only in

breeding the endangered species (which as in the case of the snow leopard they have already had some success with) but in raising public interest to the plight of species by demonstrating their special cognitive abilities.”

Regarding dignity:

“In this way they [circuses] could have an important role to play in educating the public and heightening the respect for individual animals, their unique intelligences and amazing abilities.”[6]

Further on the point of academic support of trained animals in entertainment, psychologists Keller and Marian Breland were not only known to train animals for circuses and theme parks, but also opened The IQ Zoo in Hot Springs, Arkansas, which featured trained animals, both wild and domestic, performing trained behaviours for the public, presenting their cognitive skills and plasticity. The Brelands advocated humane training, based on B.F. Skinner’s operant conditioning, who also taught Marian at University.

The relevance of the previous paragraph is in how we, as a society, accept animal training for entertainment outside of the circus, yet the government’s position is that the public is in opposition to identical activities in a travelling circus, when there is no scientific basis for this concern. To call such discriminatory prohibition “ethical” is to fail to understand the meaning of ethics. If there is an ethical standard to hold that doesn't include welfare concerns, it has to be applied universally, otherwise it is nothing more than an attempt to police taste. Such a move would be in violation of the Human Rights Act 1998, which protects art, such as circuses, under Article 10 of said act. Under this act, and as citizens of a free society, circus animal trainers, in the pursuit of work and the expression of art, have the right to be protected from any majority and the government's imposition of arbitrary standards. Simply put, to force the will of any number of people onto a minority of any kind is the very definition of illiberal.

It must be stated that evidence given against circuses of an ostensibly academic nature, especially all literature authored or co-authored by Professor Stephen Harris, formerly of the University of Bristol, has been discredited publicly, and the lack of recognition of this from the Welsh Assembly is a serious injustice to the circus community and a disservice to the people of Wales.

As a final piece of evidence, I wish to quote Mike Radford, as states in his report: “[Ministers] gave commitments in parliament that a ban would be based on scientific evidence and as yet there isn't any.” The fact that a ban is still being pursued is a clear rejection of previously set standards by which action would be taken.

In conclusion, I believe that the above submission demonstrates the illegitimacy of the proposed legislation.

[1] Wild Animals In Traveling Circuses: Report of the Chairman of the Circus Working Group October 2007

[2] Animals in Circuses And Zoos: Chiron's World?

[3] Friend, T. H. 1999. Behavior of picketed circus elephants. *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.* 62:73-88.

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Nevill, C. H. and T. H. Friend. 2003. The behavior of circus tigers during transport. *Appl. Anim. Behav. Sci.* 82:329-337.

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[4] Minutes of 2011 International Elephant and Rhino Conservation and Research Symposium (Page 31)

[5] The Moral Landscape: How Science Can Determine Human Values (Pages 11 and 44)

[6] Animals in Circuses And Zoos: Chiron's World? (Chapter 11)