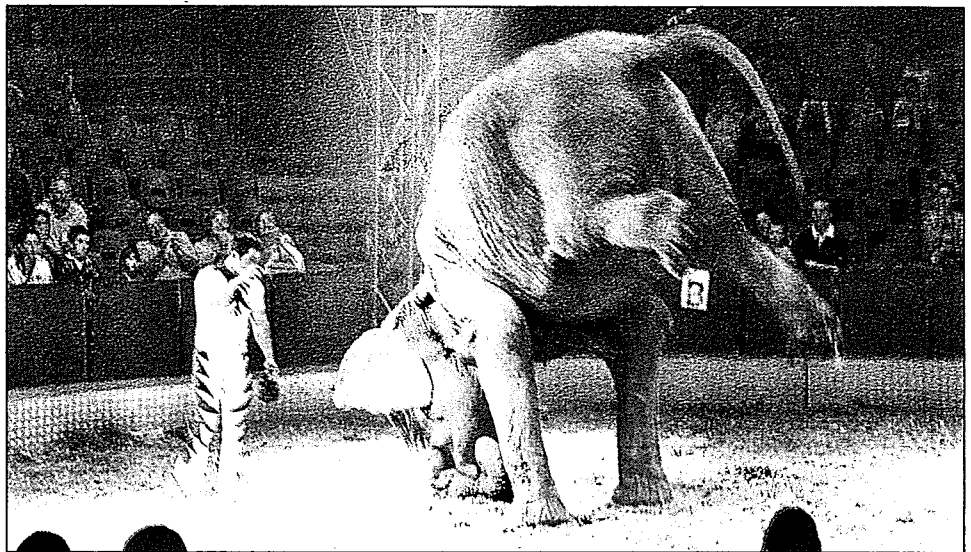


GROUP CALLS FOR TOTAL BAN ON USE OF CIRCUS ANIMALS



'Unnatural': Irish circuses have been criticised for featuring animals performing acts such as headstands and handstands

**Caged, humiliated
- just to amuse us**

By Kate Chambré

THEY should be freely roaming the plains of Africa, watched, if at all, only by distant tourists hoping to catch a glimpse of them while on safari.

Instead they are in Ireland performing 'unnatural' circus acts, such as headstands and handstands, while living in restricted conditions with little sustenance.

And all for the amusement of the general public.

The Captive Animals' Protection Society (CAPS) urged the Government yesterday to ban

'Unnatural and dangerous acts'

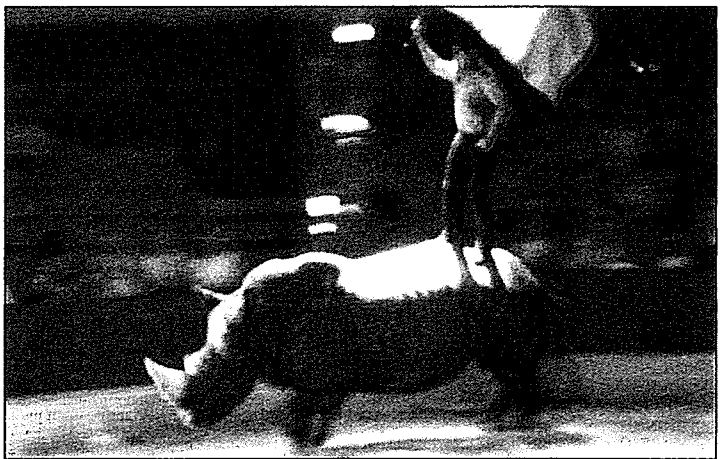
the use of all animals in circuses following the publication of a damning new report detailing numerous instances of cruelty to animals.

Entitled 'Ring of Cruelty,' the report is based on visits to five of Ireland's seven animal circuses by CAPS investigators in July 2006, some of which were accompanied by a vet.

And what they found was nothing short of shocking.

Out of 102 animals being used in circuses, 43 were of exotic species including six elephants, a giraffe, a rhino and a hippo.

While the hippo was kept solitary, housed in a small tank of dirty water unable to fully submerge, the elephants were



'Ring of Cruelty': Investigators were shocked by conditions they found behind the scenes

forced to perform 'unnatural and dangerous acts' such as headstands and handstands.

Some of the animals had been imported from across Europe, facing gruelling journeys of up to 1,000 miles.

Craig Redmond, Campaign Manager for the Captive Animals' Protection Society said: 'The touring season often lasts ten consecutive months, during which time the circus may travel the whole of Ireland, sometimes performing at two venues in the space of a week.'

A significant number of ani-

mals in circuses in Ireland live restricted lives with temporary and inadequate accommodation, constant transportation and unnatural social groups.'

Outlining specific safety concerns the report reveals how children are allowed unsupervised access to chained elephants behind electric wire.

Meanwhile a vet said that an act where a presenter had lost control of horses in the ring had been 'an appalling accident waiting to happen.'

Mr Redmond said: 'CAPS is calling on the Government to

ban the use of animals in circuses and in the meantime to prohibit all imports of animals for circus use, for local authorities to stop allowing animal circuses on council land and for the Arts Council to fund only all-human circuses.'

The circuses in Ireland are now winding down for the end of the season but after Christmas will start their new tours.

'We will be working with campaigners across Ireland to encourage the public to avoid those circuses using animals,' added Mr Redmond.

Israel admits use of phosphorous bombs

ISRAEL dropped phosphorous bombs on Lebanon this summer, its government has admitted for the first time.

During the war, the Lebanese government accused Israel of dropping the controversial weapons.

But Israel had previously claimed it only used the bombs, which cause severe chemical burns, to mark targets or

territory. Now cabinet minister Jacob Edery has confirmed it used the weapons on Hezbollah fighters.

'The Israeli army made use of phosphorous shells during the war against Hezbollah in attacks against military targets in open ground,' the Haaretz newspaper quoted Mr Edery as saying. He did not specify where or

against what types of targets the phosphorous bombs were used.

Mr Edery said international law did not ban the use of phosphorous weapons. But many human rights groups, including the Red Cross, have pushed for a ban.

Controversy also surrounds Israel's use of cluster bombs, as a Lebanese boy, 12, yesterday died after being hit by one.



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