



"The physical and behavioral needs of our animals are a top priority at *Ringling Bros.* and we are dedicated to helping to preserve the endangered Asian Elephant through the work at our *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*."

- Bruce Read, Vice President of Animal Stewardship.

Answers by Bruce Read

Tell me about *Ringling Bros.* animal care program.

- Our staff is dedicated to meeting our animals' physical and behavioral needs. For instance, elephants need daily exercise, fresh food and a compatible herd all of which they get with *Ringling Bros.*
- Our animal husbandry team provides a stable, stimulating and rewarding environment where animals thrive year-round.
- Elephants are highly intelligent, curious and playful and we provide a variety of items with which they entertain themselves. You'll notice enrichment items, such as tires, traffic cones and logs that elephants play with and climb. There are also mounds of sand that they like to throw on themselves or roll in, and when appropriate they have pools to splash in. A favorite treat during hot weather is fruit frozen in huge blocks of ice. They will spend countless hours picking at the ice blocks, smashing them and licking them to get to the frozen treat inside.

Are your animals healthy?

- Just look for yourself at the animals at *Ringling Bros.* and you will see that they are healthy, active and enriched by their environment.
- Nutritious meals, exercise and mental stimulation combined with excellent veterinary care play an integral role in the health and well-being of the animals.
- *Ringling Bros.* has an expert animal care team consisting of staff veterinarians and full-time animal care staff on each unit who are all dedicated to the animals' physical and emotional well-being 24/7. We also consult with outside animal specialists and have on-call veterinarians in every city we perform.

How does *Ringling Bros.* train its animals?

- Our animals are great performers, because their routines are tailored to each animal's natural abilities and individual preferences and reinforced through a system of repetition and reward.
- The same behaviors you see the elephants exhibit in the arena you can see among young calves naturally exploring their environment at the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum &*

Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation[®]—climbing on their mothers and on each other, doing head stands for fun or manipulating things in their environment like logs and branches.

- Because the performances are based on what the animals do during play and socialization, training is simply a matter of encouraging the elephants to do what comes naturally on cue to music. We accomplish that by reinforcing their natural behaviors through repetition and reward.
- And, because the trainers provide the animals with a stable, rewarding environment, the animals eagerly learn to repeat their behaviors in sequence and on verbal cue.
- We only include animals in our show that are comfortable with the routines and performing.
- Anyone with a dog knows that training takes patience, praise and lots of treats, but the outcome is a secure, stimulating life for the animal. The same principles hold true for an elephant.

How does *Ringling Bros.* transport its animals?

- The animals at *Ringling Bros.* travel in custom-designed train cars and other vehicles that are well-ventilated and designed to meet the specific needs of each species.
- Most of the train cars are outfitted with misters or sprinklers for hot weather, heat for cold weather and plenty of clean water and floors that are built to provide cushion and comfort.
- *Ringling Bros.* animal transportation vehicles and procedures comply with federal law and regulations and are frequently inspected by federal, state, and local regulators.
- Also, independent studies funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture of *Ringling Bros.* big cat and elephant transport facilities found that they were appropriately insulated and ventilated and had no adverse effects.

Do you mistreat your animals?

- No. Just watch our animals and their handlers interact and you will see the wonderful bond between them.
- You will also notice the animals' vitality and muscle tone and their interest in their surroundings—all signs of well adjusted healthy animals that receive excellent care, nutrition and stimulation.
- We are committed to the health and wellbeing of all our animals and we meet and exceed the standards of the Animal Welfare Act, the federal law that governs proper animal care.

How is *Ringling Bros.* animal program regulated?

- *Ringling Bros.* animals and operations are inspected regularly by authorized federal, state and local officials who enforce the animal welfare laws including the federal Animal Welfare Act. All USDA and many state and local inspections are unannounced.
- *Ringling Bros.* has an excellent record of meeting and exceeding the highest standards of animal care.

Does Ringling Bros. tether elephants?

- *Ringling Bros.* elephants spend most of their day moving about freely in their enclosures and in the arena. While the elephants are tethered at night, during mealtime and during bedtime so they do not disturb one another; most of their waking hours are spent at play, socializing, exercising and learning new routines.
- Our tethering practices are fully consistent with those prescribed by the US Department of Agriculture under the Animal Welfare Act, as well as those outlined in the Elephant Husbandry Resource Guide published by the International Elephant Foundation (IEF) and endorsed by the AZA (American Zoo and Aquarium Association) and the Elephant Managers Association (EMA).

Is the guide (sometimes referred to as an ankus or bullhook) used to intimidate an elephant to get it to comply with a trainer's commands?

- No. If you watch the way the elephants respond to the trainer you will see they are comfortable both with the trainer and the guide and that the guide is used to lead the elephant at times when the noise of the crowd or distractions might cause the elephant to miss a verbal cue. In training, animal care experts might touch an elephant's foot with the guide and say "foot" to get the elephant to lift its foot and understand the meaning of the verbal cue.
- The guide is a USDA approved tool that can be used as an extension of the handler's arm. For instance, the guide enables animal care staff to reach up 8 feet to touch an elephant on the shoulder.
- The guide is used in much the same way as reins on a horse or a leash for a dog—as a way to lead the animal.

How many of Ringling Bros. elephants were taken out of the wild?

- There are many misconceptions both about elephants now living in captivity and about conditions in what is considered the wild.
- *Ringling Bros.* has not imported an elephant from Southeast Asia in more than 30 years since an international treaty was signed to maintain endangered species in their native lands.
- Currently, the *Ringling Bros.* herd includes five elephants that were acquired from outside the United States more than 30 years ago. The rest of the herd came from other animal parks and circuses in North America and increasingly from the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*, where we have had 20 births so far.

Tell me about *Ringling Bros.* conservation efforts.

- 2005 marked the 10th anniversary of the opening of the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*, a 200-acre facility in central Florida dedicated to the breeding, scientific study and retirement of the Asian elephant. It was also a historic year for the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* with the birth of three Asian elephant calves.
- As a founding member of the International Elephant Foundation (IEF), *Ringling Bros.* has helped sponsor efforts to provide emergency veterinary care, supplies, research scholarships and grants, and management training to elephant trainers in Sumatra, Indonesia. The IEF is a nonprofit organization which supports African and Asian elephant conservation and research programs. IEF funds specifically support the protection of elephants in the wild and elephant habitats, scientific research, educational efforts, and improvements in captive elephant care.
- There are less than 35,000 Asian elephants left in the world, mostly in Southeast Asia and China, and another 10,000 in captivity.
- *Ringling Bros.* invites international conservation researchers and scientists to the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation* to visit and study the largest sustainable population of captive Asian elephants in the Western Hemisphere.
- *Ringling Bros.* also supports conservation efforts in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia and Asia. In addition, our *Ringling Bros. Center* staff is regularly contacted by zoos, veterinarians, researchers and scholars from around the world regarding elephant husbandry.
- In 2007, *Ringling Bros.* and the International Elephant Foundation hosted a Conference on Elephant Tuberculosis Research and established an action plan which was announced at the International Symposium on Elephant Conservation. The attendees identified critical areas of research and also agreed that factual information on tuberculosis to the public and regulatory authorities is of the highest ethical priority. Additionally, the group decided that further funding sources will be needed in order to mobilize critical areas of research.
- In 2008, *Ringling Bros.* made a \$135,000 commitment to the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoo to fund a reproductive research study in support of crucial research projects aimed at increasing the captive population of the endangered Asian elephant.
- In 2005, *Ringling Bros.* announced a \$180,000 gift to the Smithsonian Institution's National Zoological Park to support research on Endotheliotropic Herpes viruses (EEHV). *Ringling Bros.* also announced an important partnership with the Fort Worth Zoo - allowing the Zoo to acquire, on a breeding loan, an Asian male elephant (bull) from the *Ringling Bros. Center* in an effort to increase reproduction rates with the female Asian elephants housed at the Zoo.

How can you say you meet all the elephants' needs including exercise when in the wild elephants regularly walk 30 miles a day?

- Your question is based on a misconception about life in the wild. In Southeast Asia, the elephant is a forest dweller and unless its habitat is destroyed or overrun it doesn't have to travel far at all because its needs for food and water are met close by.
- In Africa, elephants may be forced to travel long distances to search for food at times of drought and famine. At *Ringling Bros.* our animals have a stable environment with a secure supply of food and we make sure the elephants get enough exercise to keep them stimulated and fit.

At the *Ringling Bros. Center for Elephant Conservation*, do you separate baby elephants from their mothers at birth?

- No. The calves let us know when they are ready to move to the next social level usually between 18-22 months old, when they no longer rely on their mothers for their nutrition and start showing signs of independence. Elephants are inquisitive and wander away from their mothers to explore on their own and signal to us that they are ready for the next step in their social development. The calves show us by their behavior whether they want to engage in performances on the road or reside at the *Ringling Bros. Center*. Only the natural performers join the elephant herd on the road when they are between two and seven years old.

How do you feel about the animal activist protests you face in almost every city you play?

- For more than ten years, activists have been trying to distort *Ringling Bros.* outstanding record of animal care. Often animal activists will edit videos from shows and performances that are not *Ringling Bros.* and tag it with shots from *Ringling Bros.* to mislead and misinform the public. Fortunately, our public knows better because our audiences see for themselves that *Ringling Bros.* animals are healthy and comfortable in their surroundings.
- In this increasingly urbanized country many children don't get to see animals in person unless they see them at *Ringling Bros.* or visit the local zoo or an animal park. Captive animals play an important role as Ambassadors – teaching people about the animals' needs and challenges and about our responsibility to ensure their future survival. It is disappointing that animal rights activist protesters prefer the absence of any animals in captivity, whether it is people having pets in their homes or animals in circuses and zoos.
- When *Ringling Bros.* comes to a city, we provide young people and families an opportunity to see our magnificent elephants and gain a real appreciation for all animals. We hope to engage the public in our commitment to preserve the endangered Asian elephant species here and in Southeast Asia.
- *Ringling Bros.* is pivotal in teaching the public, especially children, about the principles of conservation and our duty to steward wisely the world's animal resources. According to a 2005 Harris Poll, 95 percent of Americans believe that encountering elephants firsthand is key to encouraging greater understanding of them.

Animal activists say numerous elephants have died in *Ringling Bros.* care; what is your response?

- In the last 15 years, 25 elephants died, most as the result of old age.
- We mourn the passing of the elephants but also consider ourselves fortunate that overall our herd, the largest sustainable population of captive Asian elephants in the Western Hemisphere, is thriving and that our Asian elephant conservation program has bred 20 elephant calves since our program started in the early 1990's.
- Breeding programs like *Ringling Bros.* will be essential to the survival of the Asian elephant species.

What is the life expectancy of Asian elephants and how does that compare to the ages of *Ringling Bros.* elephants?

- The average life expectancy for Asian elephants is 45 years in North America ('Calculation of Longevity and Life Expectancy in Captive Elephants', Zoo Biology by Robert J. Wiese, 2004).
- The same study suggests that captive elephants have a longevity and life expectancy similar to wild elephants.
- *Ringling Bros.* has 13 elephants that are 45 or older, including 9 over 50 years (figures from 10/07).

What protocols are currently used to protect the audience from the dangerous cats and elephants that are so close to their seats?

- We have multiple safeguards and precautions in place and no guest has been endangered by an animal under the Feld family ownership.
- Our trainers and handlers are so attuned to the animals and know how to read them that they can tell if an animal becomes uncomfortable and they know how to calm it. For the animals, the handlers are a source of comfort and security.

What are your animals fed?

- Elephants are herbivores and eat hay and grain, as well as elephant chow. They regularly receive fruits and vegetables, and enjoy whole loaves of fresh bread. They are also given fresh browse when available as regular part of the diet.
- Tigers are carnivores and eat carefully prepared diets and are given bones to chew on to help clean their teeth.
- The hoof stock animals are herbivores and eat hay and grain with fresh browse offered when available.
- All of the animals' food is delivered directly to the venue in each city in which *Ringling Bros.* appears to ensure fresh, first quality food for our animals.

How much do you spend a year on animal care?

- Regular veterinary care, grooming, exercise, and good nutrition play an important role in our animal care program.
- We spend over \$5 million dollars a year on food, housing and medical care for our herd of 54 elephants and other animals under our care.

You heard it here...

"A concerted effort to save the Asian elephant is imperative. Zoos are doing their best with the resources they have, but most can't afford to maintain a large breeding group of elephants. The *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation* is dedicated to saving the Asian elephant and has both the resources and the commitment to succeed." – Jack Hanna, Director Emeritus, Columbus Zoo

"Guidelines such as those issued by the PRCA and *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus* can serve as effective models for other groups and individuals using animals in entertainment." The article in JAVMA on June 1, 2003 went on to say, "...he visited the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*. He was impressed by the animal welfare guidelines and quality of veterinary care provided by both groups, as well as the importance their staff placed on animal care and well-being." Adding, "We must encourage the highest level of animal health and welfare for all animals, irrespective of their purpose." – Dr. Joel M. Howell, President, American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA).

"The level of veterinary care and management is excellent and you have some of the most dedicated people looking after these animals, with great care and commitment. I am truly amazed at the level of care given to the elephants." Dr. Charles Santipalilal, zoologist, professor and Deputy Chair of the Asian Elephant Specialist Group (AESG), part of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and editor of its journal, *Gajah*.

"Second generations births in captive animal management programs are one indication that the biological and social needs of the individual animal are being appropriately addressed. It reflects the level of commitment the organization has made to a long-term propagation program. *Ringling Bros.* successful Asian Elephant propagation program is remarkable since it began a relatively short time ago," says Mike Keele, Deputy Director of the Oregon Zoo and Chair of the AZA TAG/S&P.

"Because of the long tradition we share with our animals and their integral role in our shows, it's important for *Ringling Bros.* to create entertaining and learning experiences for families to see first hand how intelligent these magnificent Asian elephants are. The kids here today will never forget seeing an Asian elephant up close and personal and for a lifetime will have a better sense of our shared responsibility in protecting and caring for animals, especially those whom are endangered like the Asian elephant." *Ringling Bros.* elephant trainer Troy Metzler

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Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey®

Animal Care Fact Sheet

Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® has more than 136 years of experience working with and caring for exotic and domestic animals. The *Ringling Bros.®* family typically includes Asian elephants, tigers, horses, zebras, camels and llamas, but varies depending on the current productions on tour.

Training: The relationship between the humans and animals that perform with *Ringling Bros.* is built on mutual respect and trust. Our training methods are based on reward and repetition in the form of food rewards and words of praise. Trainers teach animals routines that showcase their physical abilities and beauty, as well as their distinctive behaviors. Verbal or physical mistreatment and the withholding of food or water are strictly prohibited, and drugs or sedatives are not administered unless prescribed by our *Ringling Bros.* veterinarian for medical reasons.

Industry Regulations: *Ringling Bros.* is subject to comprehensive animal welfare regulations at the federal, state and local levels. Under the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducts regular unannounced inspections of our animals and the animal compound. In the more than 40 years of current ownership, *Ringling Bros.* has never been found in violation of the AWA for neglect or mistreatment of its animals. In fact, in all aspects of animal care and safety, *Ringling Bros.* meets or exceeds all federal animal welfare standards.

Animal Health: *Ringling Bros.®* employs full-time staff veterinarians who administer veterinary care to all the animals. A local veterinarian is also on call 24 hours a day in each city where the show performs. Each animal receives regular, thorough medical examinations and all needed vaccinations. The animals are fed, watered, groomed and cleaned daily. The entire stable area and the individual animal stalls are cleaned regularly, manure is removed and fresh bedding is provided.

Transportation and Housing: Our animals are transported in specially designed private railroad cars. Appropriate stops are made during travel to feed and water the animals and clean out their cars. While traveling, our animals are under constant supervision. At the arena, the animals are safely housed in individual stables or enclosures or tethered in a safe, appropriate manner. All of our animal enclosures were specially designed by our staff to meet the unique needs of each individual species.



Elephants are comfortably tethered along a line similar to those used for horses. *Ringling Bros.* has also pioneered the use of a traveling perimeter fence where our elephants can safely exercise and socialize. Tigers are housed in specially designed crates with fold-out verandas that provide ample room for movement and interaction between animals. Each animal is provided with adequate space according to its particular needs and requirements, as defined by the Animal Welfare Act, with the advice of the *Ringling Bros.* veterinarian and the animal's individual trainer.

Feeding: Our animals are fed and watered in prescribed measures on a regular schedule as determined by our animal programs team. Fresh food, including hay, protein-enriched grains, fruits, vegetables, meat, vitamin-fortified prepackaged meat, bread and a special vitamin and mineral-enriched granular mix, is shipped directly to the arena from local sources in each city.

Safety and Security: We are the first to acknowledge and respect the natural instincts of our exotic animals. Our animal attendants are familiar with the individual personalities and temperaments of their charges. *Ringling Bros.* provides around-the-clock security for our animals — protection from other animals, natural predators, public harassment, vandalism and trespassers. Only qualified animal attendants, trainers and *Ringling Bros.* personnel are allowed in the stable area. In our 138 year history, *Ringling Bros.* has never experienced an animal-related incident that placed a member of the general public at risk.

Conservation of Endangered Species: In addition to providing a healthy, safe and secure environment where humans and animals live and work together, *Ringling Bros.* is committed to and deeply involved in the conservation of exotic species. There are a number of threatened species and endangered species in our animal family. All of the *Ringling Bros.* animals are either captive-bred or were acquired in accordance with the Conference on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) or the Endangered Species Act, which prohibits the taking of animals from the wild.

Studies have proven that the public display of animals heightens public awareness of the animals themselves and of humankind's responsibility for their well-being and protection. Children, especially, become aware of the needs and abilities of animals and experience firsthand the importance of caring for and respecting all animals. *Ringling Bros.* has committed substantial resources to protect the present and future well-being of rare and endangered species. To help assure the survival of the Asian elephant, we have created the *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Center for Elephant Conservation*®, a state-of-the-art facility dedicated to the research, reproduction and retirement of this species.

Retirement: *Ringling Bros.* operates a sanctuary in Central Florida that serves as a retirement facility for elephants. The age for retiring animals varies by species and by individual animal. For example, *Ringling Bros.* elephants have performed well into their 50s, tigers to the age of 20 and horses into their 20s.

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Animal Welfare Regulations

The Greatest Show On Earth® complies with all federal, state and local regulations, in addition to its own stringent internal animal care guidelines.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Regulations and Inspections

Circuses and other traveling exhibitions are required to be licensed by the USDA. Before APHIS will issue a license or registration, the applicant must be in compliance with all standards and regulations under the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). *Ringling Bros.* is subject to comprehensive animal welfare regulations at the federal, state and local levels.

Depending on the state and/or city, *Ringling Bros.* may be required to apply for state and local permits through the local Fish and Game or animal control authority and would be subject to unannounced inspections conducted by these local agencies, as well.

Under the federal AWA, USDA representatives who are veterinarians or animal health technicians conduct regular, unannounced inspections of our animals and animal compounds.

In more than 40 years of current ownership, *Ringling Bros.* has never been found in violation of the AWA for abuse, neglect or mistreatment of its animals. In fact, in all aspects of animal care and safety, *Ringling Bros.* meets or exceeds all federal animal welfare standards.

APHIS's Animal Care (AC) program enforces the AWA primarily through inspection of regulated facilities. To ensure that all registered facilities continue to comply with the AWA, APHIS inspectors make unannounced inspections. *Ringling Bros.* works with inspectors to correct any non-compliance issues and is subject to legal action if requested changes have not been met within a given timeframe.

Licensed exhibitors must maintain on their premises accurate records of the animals that come into their possession and of the veterinary care the animals receive. The information must be made available to APHIS during inspections.

APHIS requires registered facilities to comply with standards for the following: housing, ventilation, lighting, interior surfaces, primary enclosures, sanitation, pest control, feeding and watering, outdoor shelter, compatibility, record-keeping, adequate veterinary care, handling and transportation.

AWA contains language about training requirements, and *Ringling Bros.* always meets or exceeds these standards. In fact *Ringling Bros.* trainers are considered experts in the use of operant conditioning techniques with elephants.



According to the USDA regulations, *Ringling Bros.* and other regulated exhibitors "must minimize possible harmful risks to the public and to the animals during public exhibition by providing sufficient distance or barriers between the animals and the public. Exhibitors must ensure responsible attendants are present when animals are in direct contact with the public and potentially dangerous animals such as tigers and elephants must be under the direct control of an experienced trainer." *Ringling Bros.* either meets or exceeds all federal regulations.

Ringling Bros. Animal Welfare Policies

It is the policy of *Ringling Bros.* to maintain the highest quality of animal care and husbandry for both *Ringling*-owned and all contract acts in which animals are involved. *Ringling Bros.* policy strictly prohibits any mistreatment of any animal. Company guidelines regarding animal treatment are posted in each animal enclosure. These guidelines are also distributed to each member of our Animal Care Staff periodically and are on file in the unit management office. It is the responsibility of all staff to review these guidelines regularly.

It is also the responsibility of all employees to share any concerns they may have regarding general animal welfare or care with their immediate supervisor. If an employee does not feel comfortable discussing any questions or concerns with his or her immediate supervisor, any of the following individuals may be contacted in a timely manner:

Veterinary Technician
Unit Superintendent of Animals
General Manager
Attending Veterinarian
Vice President of Animal Stewardship
Vice President Circus Touring Units
Legal Department

Any concerns that employees are reluctant to report personally may be submitted to any of these individuals. All questions and concerns will be immediately reviewed to ensure that all practices are in accordance with Feld Entertainment, Inc., policies and guidelines.

Partnership with Animal Welfare Inspectors

Ringling Bros. animal handlers share information and work closely with federal, state, and local officials to ensure that *Ringling Bros.* maintains the highest quality animal care practices and inspectors have the best information on which to make evaluations.

Ringling Bros. animal handlers conduct interactive workshops throughout the country for animal control officers who want to understand more about the health and welfare of exotic and domestic animals and also become better equipped to conduct inspections of animal facilities around the state and with traveling circuses and exhibitors.

Parts of this information were taken directly from APHIS Animal Care Fact Sheet

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