

LIST OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING ANIMALS USED IN CIRCUSES –AUSTRALIA

These incidents are from 1961 until today. Circuses have been around much longer of course and we have no doubt that accidents and deaths will continue to happen as they did in the past unless the use of animals in circuses is banned.

If you see a circus using animals in your town or city, write, and include this information, to your local council asking that they consider joining the other statewide councils in placing a ban on leasing land to circuses using animals/exotic animals. This is an important tool in helping to raise the awareness of both the council and councillors as to the issues that surround the cruelty and suffering the animals endure.

OCTOBER 1961 – Strathmore, VIC

An 18 year old elephant, Topsy, panicked at Bullens Circus and ran onto railway tracks where she was hit by a train and killed.

DECEMBER 1964

An animal keeper with O'Connells Circus was killed and eaten by 4 lions.

1973 – Perth WA

A 14 year old boy was severely mauled by a tiger belonging to Sole Brothers' Circus.

MARCH 1974 – Heidelberg VIC

Ashton's elephant Abu, killed her first victim, Douglas Lang-Smith who was a driver/attendant with the circus.

JANUARY 1978 – Prince Alfred Park NSW

Sole Brothers pony, Rock, was killed when a tree crashed through power lines during a storm.

DECEMBER 1978

Sole Brothers' elephant, Lana, knocked out a circus hand before plunging into a creek where she remained for over an hour.

FEBRUARY 1980 – Melbourne VIC

The Monte Carlo International Circus was prosecuted by the Victorian Ministry for Conservation for failing to confirm to minimum cage sizes.

MAY 1980

A lion belonging to Lennon Brothers' Circus attacked and injured a 6 year old girl, despite the 'precaution' of having his claws removed when 6 months old.

AUGUST 1980 – Ingham QLD

Ashtons' elephant Abu, escaped from the circus and ran into a cane field. Two years later, to the day, she repeated her escapade in the same cane field.

SEPTEMBER 1980 – Near Herbert QLD

3 Lions and 5 tigers were trapped for 4 hours when their cage overturned on the banks of the Wild River.

DECEMBER 1981

Sole Brothers' elephant, Tara fell from a semi trailer, sustaining a gash to the head above the right eye.

AUGUST 1982 – Ingham QLD

Ashtons' elephant Abu, escaped from the circus and ran into a cane field. Two years, to the day, that she escaped into the same cane field.

DATE UNKNOWN

Ashton's elephant Mother, fell down a disused mine shaft, hurting a molar which subsequently became infected and she died.

DATE UNKNOWN

Cardie an elephant used by a circus was shot after knocking down her trainer and crushing him against the wall of a truck.

DATE UNKNOWN

Sole Brothers' elephants Betty and Jodi have killed a journalist and a spectator respectively.

FEBRUARY 1983

2 Elephants belonging to Sole Brothers' Circus were killed in a road accident.

1983

Ashtons' elephant Abu killed her handler Debbie Wirth by crushing her with her trunk. Debbie was Abu's second victim.

DATE UNKNOWN

Sole Brothers' lion 'tamer' Joe Eronis, received 80 stiches after being attacked by a lion. On another occasion, Mr Eronis held a furious lion by the tail when the lion threatened to leap from the cage into the audience.

DATE UNKNOWN

Australian circus identity Stafford Bullen has, by his own admission, been convicted of cruelty to a monkey whose chain had become embedded in the flesh of the neck.

1983

Worlds Greatest Circus Spectacular fined \$4,000 on charges of cruelty relating to cage sizes.

1983

Circus Startime (later Circus Santos) found guilty of failing to conform to cage regulations.

1983

Edgley's Circus bear 'trainer' pleaded guilty to overcrowding.

1984

Sole Brothers convicted of cruelty to a camel. Halter embedded in the flesh of the nose.

1984

Circus Royale proprietor Frank Gasser attacked by a lion. Needed 64 stiches.

DECEMBER 1984- Eltham

Silvers Circus proprietors convicted of two counts of cruelty to lion cubs. The cubs were unable to walk from malnutrition, calcium deficiency, worms and mange.

1986

Edgley's Great Moscow Circus on Ice denied RSPCA access when attempting to conduct routine inspection.

JANUARY 1986 – Richmond VIC

TV cameras witness employee of Perry's and Bullens Combined Circus throw a monkey at an Animal Liberation representative attempting to inspect the animals.

MARCH 1986 – Melbourne

Circus Royale refused permission to RSPCA attempting to investigate compliance with the Wildlife Act. VICT RSPCA now has powers to inspect.

MARCH 1986 – Darwin NT

A camel with the Sole Brothers Circus was attacked by two lions who escaped from their cage. Prior to attacking the camel, the lions turned on their 'trainer' who took refuge in a caravan after fending them off with an industrial bin.

SEPTEMBER 1987 – Gunnedah NSW

Ashton's elephant Abu killed her third victim, George Littlejohn, who was a horse groom with the circus.

DECEMBER 1987 – Sydney NSW

The RSPCA ordered Edgley International to provide larger quarters for the Moscow Circus' brown bears after they were found living in cramped and barren conditions.

DECEMBER 1987 – Sydney NSW

An animal 'trainer' from the Moscow Circus was attacked by a bear used by the circus.

EASTER 1988 – Sydney NSW

An animal handler from Robert and Alby Perry's Circus was hospitalised after being mauled by a tiger used by the circus.

AUGUST 1988 – Noosa Heads QLD

3 Camels with Ashtons' Circus died after being grazed on a property which had recently been sprayed with a poisonous substance.

FEBRUARY 1989 – Moruya NSW

Ashtons' lion keeper, Brett Hall, received 170 stiches after being mauled by a tiger named Moscow, who had been reared by the circus since birth. The tiger escaped from his cage prior to this incident and was eventually recaptured by circus hands using tent poles, cattle prods and a rope tied to his tail.

APRIL 1990 – Melbourne VIC

The organisers of visiting French Circus Archaos were forced to withdraw a live chicken from use in the show. The chicken made her first appearance in the ring being dragged around by the use of a heavy chain. Later a performer swung from a rope with the chicken's head in his mouth. Responding to the demand for the act to be dropped from the circus, Mr Pashalito stated "If you make some problem about that, I swear I will kill one chicken for each of the 25 shows we are here for".

FEBRUARY 1991 – Ararat VIC

A group of lions belonging to Russells' Free Circus were released from their cages by an intoxicated man who had been attending a nearby party. Four men including a police officer were mauled before the lions were recaptured.

MARCH 1991

New South Wales Environment Minister Tim Moore announced that Sole Brothers' Circus would be refused a permit to import 9 'trained' lions from Papua New Guinea. According to the Minister, "Sole Brothers' Circus has failed to meet standards required under the Exhibited Animals Protection Act and has been unable to demonstrate that the lions, if imported, would be housed to the standards considered acceptable in New South Wales".

Jean Perry, a proprietor of Sole Brothers' Circus wrote to Minister Moore requesting that he overturn the above decision. In her letter, Mrs Perry admitted that the circus' existing lions "are of an old age...and should have been retired long ago". Mrs Perry also attempted to mislead the Minister when she claimed in her letter that animal liberation groups "will protest" if a permit to import the animals is refused.

MAY 1991 – Townsville QLD

A monkey belonging to Sole Brothers' Circus was trampled to death after falling from the back of a horse and being dragged around the ring for 30 minutes, all in front of a stunned audience. Commenting on the accident, circus owner, Lindsay Sole stated "It's like a rodeo rider; he takes a chance of being killed". When it was pointed out that rodeo riders have a choice, Mr Sole added: "It's an animal isn't it: what else would it be doing?"

APRIL 26 1997 – Perth WA

A visitor to Lennon Brothers' Circus had one finger bitten off and two others injured by a circus tiger when he approached too close to the cage.

JULY 1998 – Helidon QLD

A macaque monkey owned by an animal 'trainer' from the Great Australian Circus, former circus owner Steve Robinson, died after escaping from the cage and spending 5 days at large. The animal crawled into the yard of a private dwelling adjoining Mr Robinsons' property and died shortly afterwards. The monkey was one of many who had been left for months in their cages on the Helidon property, apparently because they were considered to be redundant. No advice had been issued to residents concerning the monkey's escape. Mr Robinson was on tour at the time.

AUGUST 5 1998 – Dumolly VIC

Perry Brothers' elephant Ginny, fled into nearby bushland after being frightened by a passing train. She was not located and recaptured until the following day.

SEPTEMBER 1999 – Narre Warren

During a performance one of the elephants used by Ashtons' Circus, Abu fell toward the audience after being pushed off her pedestal by another elephant, Tanya.

A young girl is hurt whilst sitting in the audience at the show when Abu, landed on her. She was taken to a medical centre for x rays on her swollen arm.

AUGUST 11 2001- Penrith NSW

Lennon's Circus. Lion 'tamer' Geoffrey Lennon was attacked by three lions during a performance in Penrith. The attack resulted in severe lacerations to the buttocks requiring surgery. Many children were crying in a severely distressed state after witnessing the attack. The owner of the circus stated that he had no idea why the lions would attack...

JULY 16 2003 – Adelaide's Bonython Park.

A caravan owned by Stardust Circus was completely gutted by a fire whilst in Adelaide's Bonython Park. Two people escape uninjured but a third man received burns to his shoulder. No fire extinguishers were apparently available. Hoses and buckets were used to quell the blaze until the fire appliances arrived.

Thanks to Animal Liberation.