

## Non-Domesticated Animals in Entertainment

### **Position:**

The Edmonton Humane Society (EHS) does not support the capture, captivity or use of non-domesticated animals, whether captured or captive-bred, for the purpose of entertainment.

### **Definitions:**

Entertainment: Acts and shows that utilize animals for the purpose of human entertainment, which includes, but is not limited to, entertainment parks, animal encounters and interactions such as photo opportunities and direct human-animal interactions, mobile animal exhibits, and circuses and carnivals with performing animals.

Domesticated Animal: Animals who have been selectively bred over many generations to live in close association with humans. These animals have been bred for characteristics that allow for human handling and contact, are genetically distinct from wild animals and do not occupy an ecological niche in the wild.

### Summary

- The complex environmental, physiological, social and behavioural needs of non-domesticated animals cannot be fully met in captivity.
- Entertainment does not hold educational value, promote conservation or promote an increase in an animal's quality of life.
- The conditions of procurement, transport, training and captivity of non-domesticated animals is often substandard and compromises their welfare.

### Rationale

- Non-domesticated animals captured and bred for use in entertainment include, but are not limited to, primates, cetaceans, ungulates, big cats, snakes, crocodiles, elephants and bears.
- Engaging in entertainment for humans is not essential or beneficial to animals.
- For a non-domesticated animal to have appropriate welfare in a captive environment, these animals would need to have more basic physical, behavioural and environmental needs, such as low space requirements and simple social structures. However, this is often not the case for non-domesticated animals used in entertainment.
- Animals become domesticated only after many generations due to hundreds or thousands of years of selective breeding for characteristics that allow for living in close association with humans. Wild animals are not domesticated and are not suited for captivity; therefore, they are never entirely predictable or under control.
- Captive-bred, non-domesticated animals are still considered animals with "wild" traits and their needs cannot be met in captivity.

- The utilization of animals in entertainment can foster the misinterpretation that non-domesticated species are safe to approach in their natural habitat or are appropriate animals for captivity or companionship.
- Entertainment acts often show animals performing unnatural behaviours which:
  - do not serve any purpose or benefit to the animals;
  - hold no educational value for the audience; and
  - contribute to a misunderstanding of animal behaviour.
- Animals in entertainment are often subject to cruel and inhumane training methods, physical restraints like chains and tethers, premature removal from their mothers and unnecessary medical treatments to make them less dangerous to humans, such as sedation, declawing, and tooth removal.
- Animals used in entertainment may be subject to activities which interfere with the frequency and ability to engage in natural activities and behaviours, such as foraging or hunting for food, sleeping, and grooming.
- Animals used in entertainment have little choice, control and variety in their environment and activities.
- The sourcing of animals used in entertainment can promote illegal wildlife trade and unethical practices such as and inhumane capture methods.
- Transport of animals in entertainment can be frequent, inhumane and inappropriate for the species.
- Animals bred in captivity for the purpose of use in entertainment may not be bred with welfare in mind. For example, the deliberate selection of “rare colours” can lead to the inheritance of genetic conditions that may have adverse conditions on the animal's health.
- Animals may develop behavioural and medical conditions or injuries as a result of being in captivity and/or entertainment activities, such as:
  - stereotypies, overgrooming, self-mutilation and other abnormal behaviours;
  - hyper-aggression;
  - decreased fertility;
  - shorter life spans;
  - obesity;
  - chronic stress;
  - dental trauma;
  - Malnutrition; and
  - musculoskeletal disorders, such as arthritis.
- Complex social needs are not met for animals in captivity, including:
  - social animals who must be housed with other animals, solitary animals being forced to live and perform in the same confined space as other animals.
  - inability for the natural formation of social groups, instead social structures in captivity are unnatural and artificially formed.
  - inappropriate group sizes for the species and physical size constraints of the environment.
- Activities involving human-animal interactions can pose zoonotic disease risks and lead to injuries and fatalities.

- While EHS does not support the practice of keeping animals in captivity for the purposes of entertainment, EHS believes that these animals should have, at minimum, the ability to experience the Five Freedoms and positive welfare states. Moreover, these animals should receive care informed by best practices established by reputable accrediting bodies, taking into consideration their species specific physical, behavioural, social and environmental needs.
- EHS encourages potential visitors to examine an organization's animal welfare policies if considering visiting sites or acts that involve the use of animals.

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