

July 31, 2006

The Honorable Charles H. Bronson
Commissioner of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800

1 page via fax: 850-922-4936

Dear Mr. Commissioner:

This is an urgent request for your office to implement an immediate quarantine of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus' breeding facility in Polk City, Fla., in order to protect the safety of both humans and nonhumans. PETA has learned from an informed source that a male elephant at the facility has tested positive for *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (TB). According to Dr. John Lewis of the International Zoo Veterinary Group, "If tuberculosis is diagnosed in an elephant, there are clear public health implications as the disease can be spread by close contact with infected animals and people." As you may recall, your agency placed Ringling's Williston, Fla., facility under quarantine in 1999 because of TB-positive elephants.

Ringling has a lengthy history of improperly handling, testing, and treating elephants with TB:

- Last September, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) cited Ringling for failure to dispose of expired and undated TB drugs.
- In August 2004, a Ringling employee who had contact with the elephants who travel with the circus tested positive for exposure to TB.
- In November 2002, the USDA cited Ringling for failure to test four elephants for TB and warned, "TB is a disease that is dangerous to both man and animals. Animals must be tested in a timely manner for their protection as well as for their handlers."
- In September 2000, Ringling was cited by the USDA for failing to provide veterinary care to an elephant named Tillie who has been diagnosed with TB.
- In February 1999, a USDA report indicated that TB tests for one elephant were not available for review and no treatment was instituted for another elephant with positive TB status.
- At least eight of Ringling's elephants have tested positive for TB since 1999.

Knowing that this strain of TB can apparently spread from elephant to human, human to human, and human to elephant, it is imperative that your office deal with the seriousness of this situation by placing the Polk City facility under immediate quarantine. Failing to do so places Floridians, human and nonhuman, at risk of contracting TB. May I please hear from you about this important matter? You can reach me at 312-224-8650 or RaeLeannS@peta.org.

Sincerely,



RaeLeann Smith, Circus Specialist



PEOPLE FOR THE ETHICAL
TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

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