

Animal Matters



Summer 09



IN THE NEWS...

Anger over return of elephants to British circus

Elephants are performing in a UK circus this summer for the first time in a decade after the Great British Circus (GBC) imported three females from Germany in February.

One of the animals, Sonja, an African female elephant in her 30s, was orphaned during a 'cull' in the mid-1970s and sold to a circus. The other two are Asian elephants who were sold to circuses by Burmese logging camps.

The three elephants will be transported around the country by the GBC for nine months of the year despite a government statement three years ago that it would ban the use of at least some wild animals in circuses. In May, the first global study of animal welfare in circuses concluded that wild animals suffer in such settings. Professor Stephen Harris of the University of Bristol, the study's lead researcher, said: 'Whether it's lack of space and exercise, or lack of social contact, all factors combined show it's a poor quality of life.' Worst affected are elephants, lions, tigers and bears. Often they're confined to cages where they pace up and down for hours on end.



Youth activists speak out!

Animal Aid Youth Group activists joined the protest against the Great British Circus when it visited Tonbridge in June. The young protesters displayed placards and handed out leaflets to people going to the circus. As well as the recently imported elephants, the GBC menagerie also includes tigers and lions – animals who are also totally unsuited to the circus ring.

RESOURCES: Circus factsheet for students – see overleaf • Free schools' DVD on circuses – contact us for a copy • Lesson idea – see overleaf • Student web link – for more info see www.animalaid.org.uk/youth

EU seal ban victory

In May this year, following months of lobbying by campaign groups and members of the public, Members of the European Parliament voted overwhelmingly to ban trading in all seal products. This means that national bans on commercial trading in seal products are now in force in 57 countries, including the USA and all the 27 countries of the European Union. Europe's fur markets were the biggest buyers of Canada's seal pelts, so the ban should be a major economic blow to the Canadian seal killing industry.



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RESOURCES: Canadian seal 'cull' factsheet – see overleaf
• Letter-writing activity – see overleaf

Belgian city goes veggie

In May, Ghent became the first city in the world to go vegetarian at least once a week. There will be a regular meatless day when civil servants and elected councillors will set an example by opting for vegetarian meals. It is hoped that the move will cut Ghent's carbon footprint and help tackle obesity. The city's school children will follow suit with their own *Veggie Day* in September. Paul McCartney has since launched his own programme calling for a British meat-free Monday. Animal Aid will be supporting this initiative.

RESOURCES: Lesson idea – see overleaf

Animal tests to be phased out

Last year, three leading US government agencies announced that they were phasing out the use of animals to evaluate the safety of new chemicals and medicines. Under a five-year programme, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Toxicology Programme and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will start replacing animal tests with methods such as human cell cultures and computer models. They aim to eliminate live animal use in toxicity testing in the USA within ten years.

RESOURCES: Humane research factsheet – see overleaf

Resources

Updated Animal Aid Factsheets

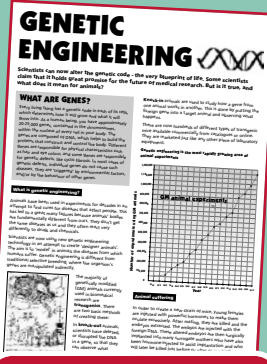
To download or order any of our factsheets, visit the resources section of our website or call the office.



CIRCUSES

The circus has a long history of entertainment and education. It is a place where people can see animals in a way that is different from their everyday lives. However, many people who go to a circus with performing animals are unaware that, behind the scenes, there is a lot more of cruelty and suffering.

Circuses: Information on performing animals in circuses.



GENETIC ENGINEERING

Selection can save after the genetic code, the very blueprint of life, some scientists claim that it holds great promise for the future of medical research. But is it worth the cost to the animals?

Genetic Engineering: Information on the use of animals in genetic engineering research.



THE CANADIAN SEAL CULL

Many people who go to a circus with performing animals are unaware that, behind the scenes, there is a lot more of cruelty and suffering.

Canadian Seal 'Cull': Information on the Canadian slaughter of harp seals.



HUMANE RESEARCH

Every year, millions of animals suffer and die in laboratory experiments. Some people claim that there is no alternative to animal testing for the safety of new products. Others claim that animal research is essential for the development of new medicines and treatments.

Humane Research: Information on the alternatives to using animals in research.

The pen is mightier than the sword!



To link to our new campaign letter-writing section, students can go to www.animalaid.org.uk/go/campaign_letters.

This features a list of campaigning letter/email ideas for issues such as:

- animal experiments • animal circuses • the Canadian seal cull
- the proposed Welsh badger cull • bird shooting • bull fighting
- the fur trade



The section includes the names of people to write to (MPs, MEPs, companies, heads of government, etc.), contact addresses, suggested points to cover in your letter and general advice on composing letters.

Lesson Ideas

Meat-Free Day: Food Tech/English (KS3)

Provide students with copies of the BBC news report and play the interview from BBC World Service. Debate whether your town/city/school should follow Ghent's example and introduce a Meat-Free day each week. *For full instructions and the source of the article, see below.*

Circus debate: English (KS4)

Provide students with copies of the Timesonline article *Anger over return of elephants to British circus*. Read, analyse and discuss. Set students the task of investigating the pros and cons of performing animals in circuses and draw up a list of the key arguments both for and against. Follow this with a debate. Conclude by getting students to write a letter to their MP, asking him or her to either support or oppose a ban on performing wild animals in circuses and to write a statement for the Have your say section relating to the article on the Timesonline site. *For resource sources see below.*

Circus debate: Citizenship (KS3)

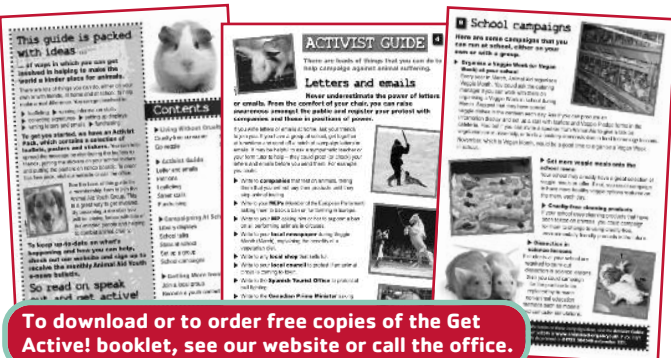
See below.

Visit the Animal Matters/Lesson Ideas section of our website at www.animalaid.org.uk/education, for resource sources and for the circus debate KS3 Citizenship idea.

Get Active! booklet

This new guide from Animal Aid is packed with lots of things that young people can do at home and at school to help make the world a kinder place for animals.

It gives guidance on leafletting, setting up information displays, collecting signatures for petitions, running information stalls, writing campaigning letters and emails and fundraising.

Get Active!

Letters and emails

Remember to underline the power of letters or emails. From the comfort of your chair, you can raise awareness, spread the message and register your protest with convenience and in a positive way.

School campaigns

There are some campaigns that you can run at school, either on your own or with a group.

To download or to order free copies of the Get Active! booklet, see our website or call the office.

Contact details

Animal Aid Education Department
 The Old Chapel, Bradford Street, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 1AW
To order resources or to book a school speaker:
www.animalaid.org.uk/education
 Tel: 01732 364546 ext 221 (orders), ext 234 (talks), ext 230 (other enquiries). Email: education@animalaid.co.uk