



STATEMENT

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 734-7799 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

STATEMENT FROM ACTING APHIS ADMINISTRATOR KEVIN SHEA REGARDING ALLEGATIONS OF ANIMAL ABUSE IN RINGLING BROTHERS CIRCUS

July 28, 2009

On July 21, 2009, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) received a complaint from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals regarding mistreatment of elephants and tigers at Ringling Brothers Circus. USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has initiated a thorough investigation into these allegations.

We at APHIS take the protection of animals very seriously. One of our core missions is to enforce the Animal Welfare Act. This Act is the federal law that ensures that proper standards of care are met for the humane treatment of animals that are exhibited to the public. Our veterinarians and animal care inspectors are deeply committed to making sure that exhibited animals receive appropriate care and exhibitors comply with the Act. Physical punishment, as alleged in the complaint, is inconsistent with the Act's standards, and is one of the items our inspectors will look into during their investigation.

Our driving focus during this investigation will be to ensure that these animals are treated humanely and that they are receiving proper care. If our investigators uncover Animal Welfare Act infractions, we will take the appropriate enforcement action.

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