



PETA Factsheet

Walker Bros. Circus

USDA # (None-formerly 58-C-0010), 410 Houle Ave., Sarasota, FL 34232

Walker Bros. Circus has failed to meet minimal federal standards for the care of animals used in exhibition as established in the Animal Welfare Act (AWA). The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has charged Walker Bros. Circus with numerous violations of the AWA, including failure to maintain programs of disease control and prevention for transporting two elephants infected with a human strain of tuberculosis and endangering both animal and human lives. In 2004, Walker Bros. Circus admitted to 18 violations of the AWA. Walker Bros. Circus no longer has its own USDA license and leases elephants from Carson & Barnes Circus*, Cole Bros. Circus*, and previously from Hawthorn Corporation*. Contact PETA for documentation.

June 24, 2005: According to a permit issued by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, Walker Bros. Circus is using elephants supplied by Carson & Barnes Circus. In January 2002, PETA supplied undercover videotape to federal authorities showing Carson & Barnes' animal care director, Tim Frisco, viciously attacking and shocking terrified elephants during a training session. Frisco instructs other trainers to hurt the elephants until they scream.

June 23, 2004: The USDA cited Walker Bros. elephant exhibitor Cole Bros. Circus for failure to correct a previously identified noncompliance of causing elephants trauma, physical harm, and behavioral stress when Walker Bros. performed in Rockport, Massachusetts. A witness reported seeing a circus worker repeatedly hit an elephant about the head and face with a long stick. The elephant grunted and also gave "a high pitched sound." The elephant handler subsequently admitted to the USDA inspector that he "had hit the elephant named Jewel several times about the head" with a plastic PVC pipe because the elephant had touched some wires. The inspector observed apparent injuries on Jewel's forehead and above her left eye. The circus was also cited for failure to test new employees working with elephants for tuberculosis, failure to have a complete program of veterinary care, and failure to maintain the camel enclosure.

March 29, 2004: According to a consent decision, circus owner John Caudill Jr. and elephant trainer John Caudill III admitted to 18 violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act in order to settle charges filed by the USDA in April 2003. The Caudills were ordered to pay a \$25,000 fine, and their exhibitor's license was suspended for five years.

April 9, 2003: The USDA filed charges against Walker Bros. Circus and its elephant supplier, Hawthorn Corporation. The complaint against Walker Bros. alleges 24 violations of the minimum standards of care established in the Animal Welfare Act that affected four elephants between March 16, 2001, and March 4, 2002. Charges included causing physical harm and discomfort, failure to provide veterinary care to an emaciated elephant, failure to provide veterinary care to an elephant suffering with severe chemical burns and a bacterial infection, failure to provide veterinary care to several elephants with potentially deadly foot problems, unsafe public contact, and operating without a USDA exhibitor's license.

October 11, 2001: The USDA cited Hawthorn for failure to correct a previously identified noncompliance of not providing veterinary care by an experienced veterinarian to elephants traveling with Walker Bros. Circus. The

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA
23510**

757-622-7382 • PETA.org • Circuses.com

PETA Factsheet

inspector wrote, "I spoke with the veterinarian ... that had examined the animals on 10/10/01. He stated that he was not sure about the proper treatment for the elephants because he did not have much experience [in] treating them."

October 5, 2001: The USDA cited Hawthorn for failure to correct previously identified noncompliances of not providing veterinary care and security for its elephants traveling with Walker Bros. Circus. Delhi had an open, draining, and bleeding wound on her nail with blood stains on and around the nail and foot. The area above the nail was swollen and warm to the touch. The cuticles on both of her front feet were "very overgrown." Delhi was limping in pain and favored her leg during the performance. There were no documents to indicate that a qualified person was providing foot care. Tess' left eye was very teary, and she was squinting; the trainer claimed that he had run out of an antibiotic ointment to treat her eye. Two bottles of expired medication were found by the inspector. The inspector also observed that an experienced elephant handler was not present while the public came near elephants walking freely in a pen. The inspector returned later, after the report had been discussed with the licensee, and again found that the elephants were loose and unattended.

October 2, 2001: The USDA cited Hawthorn for failure to provide veterinary care to three elephants (Liz, Delhi, and Tess, traveling with Walker Bros. Circus) with overgrown nails and cuticles. Hawthorn was also cited for failure to have dangerous animals under the control of experienced handlers. The inspector observed parents and children approaching and petting elephants while no attendant was present. Hawthorn was cited for failure to provide structurally sound enclosures. The inspector wrote, "[T]he elephants were inside an orange plastic mesh 'fence.' It was down in two places. ... [Local authorities] informed me that earlier in the day, at least one [elephant] was outside this enclosure. Two [elephants] were completely free from any restraint. ... A water hose was running water over an electrical cord. This area was able to be touched by both elephants and the public."

October 1, 2001: The Harlan County Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in Kentucky lodged a complaint with a county judge after observing that Hawthorn elephants with Walker Bros. Circus had "numerous red and raw spots on their ears from being speared with the hook-like device the trainer uses. ... The traveling quarters for the animals were at best cramped and inadequate. And at no time did I see any water dish or clean food be provided for any of the ... elephants."

September 18, 2001: PETA filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission asking the agency to investigate alleged fraudulent advertising practices. Walker Bros. Circus uses the media to promulgate deceptive information in an effort to lure customers to the circus by advertising a birthday celebration for an elephant named Maude. These promotions typically invite the public to bring food for Maude or to come early to buy rides on elephants or ponies. Maude's "birthday parties" occur on various dates across the country, and the circus provides inconsistent information about her age, sometimes listing it as between 40 and 45 and at other times giving a specific age in that range. The circus indicates that it knows the date of Maude's birth, suggesting that she was born in captivity, and misrepresents her age. According to the *Asian Elephant Studbook*, Maude was a baby when she was captured in the wild and taken from her family in 1937. Elephant captures are violent and often result in the mature members of the herd being killed. Maude's birth date is not known. She is over 60 years old, yet is still being subjected to grueling circus routines and a stressful life on the road.

May 15, 2001: According to the *Chicago Sun-Times*, horses, ponies, and a Walker Bros. circus worker were injured in a traffic accident involving two circus tractor-trailers in Merrillville, Ind. The accident report states that one circus vehicle traveling at a high rate of speed swerved out of control, crossed a median and oncoming traffic, then tipped over onto its side. A police officer wrote, "No insurance information was available on the vehicles at the time of crash."

April 13, 2001: A letter to the editor published in the *Chicago Sun-Times* stated, "I escorted a group of schoolchildren, including my 8-year-old daughter, to this year's Medinah Shrine Circus. ... When the elephants were brought behind the curtain, the trainer began verbally abusing and hitting the elephant. We watched in horror as he swung a stick with all his force and struck the elephant in the back of the leg. This must have hurt because the elephant let out a scream that could be heard throughout the UIC Pavilion. The kids were frightened and asked me why the man was hurting the elephant." According to documents from the city of Chicago, a cruelty to animals complaint was filed against trainer John Caudill. Caudill, of Walker Bros. Circus, uses the stage name Johnny Walker III.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA
23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • Circuses.com**

PETA Factsheet

July 9, 1999: The USDA cited Hawthorn for failure to provide veterinary care to an elephant named Lota, who had a "large open wound on the right hip area." The inspector wrote, "During the inspection, the left side of the wound was weeping and bloody." Lota travels with Walker Bros. Circus.

January 23, 1998: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for insufficient pens for sheep and problems with veterinary care and feeding. The inspector noted, "[S]heep had thick coats of wool through which their body condition was not immediately evident. However, on palpation of two of them, it became evident that they were somewhat thin."

February 6, 1997: The USDA cited Hawthorn for failure to provide veterinary care. The inspector wrote, "Lota is extremely thin, and [her] eyes appear to be sunken in." Lota travels with Walker Bros. Circus.

February 1997: The USDA charged Walker Bros. Circus with AWA violations for operating without a license; failure to maintain complete records showing the acquisition, disposition, and identification of animals; failure to maintain programs of disease control and prevention, euthanasia, and adequate veterinary care under the supervision and assistance of a doctor of veterinary medicine; failure to provide a sufficient distance or barrier between animals and the general viewing public so as to ensure the safety of the animals and the public; failure to place animals under the direct control and supervision of a knowledgeable and experienced animal handler; and failure to transport animals in structurally sound enclosures and maintain these enclosures in good repair so as to protect the animals from injury. Dr. Ron DeHaven of the USDA stated, "These charges are very serious. The Animal Welfare Act, designed to provide for and protect animals, was allegedly ignored. Not only were animal lives in danger, but human lives as well."

January 1, 1997: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for not keeping appropriate records for the animals and for an incomplete program of veterinary care.

October 1996: Health officials obtained a court injunction to stop Walker Bros. from entering Florida because the circus was traveling with two elephants infected with a strain of tuberculosis transmittable to humans.

August 27, 1996: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for failing to have a veterinary program for elephants.

October 10, 1995: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for several noncompliant items, including unsafe enclosures, insufficient fencing, and failure to have a program of veterinary care. The circus was also cited for inappropriate handling of the elephants. The USDA inspector stated, "Each elephant had [two or three] puncture wounds behind the left ear and at least one under the chin from uncaredful use of [an] elephant hook. One puncture on Liz had some pus in one of these small wounds."

August 14, 1995: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for failing to have holding facilities that were structurally sound and maintained in order to protect the animals from injury. The circus was also cited for failing to have a program of veterinary care.

July 10, 1995: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for storing the animals' food with toxic substances. The circus was also cited for failing to have a program of veterinary care for the animals. Lota, an elephant "rented" from the Hawthorn Corporation, another facility with multiple, serious violations of the AWA, had deep fissures on her feet that the USDA inspector identified as needing medical attention.

January 10, 1995: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for failing to have a valid license. The circus also did not have records or a written program of veterinary care for the animals.

August 3, 1994: The USDA cited Walker Bros. for failing to have a barrier fence for the elephants. The inspector noted, "[T]he barrier fence around the elephants is not complete, and there is no attendant on duty, allowing a couple with a small child to approach the animals." The circus also had no written program or records of veterinary care.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA
23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • Circuses.com**

PETA Factsheet

June 21, 1988: According to USDA and Canadian law enforcement documents, while a Hawthorn elephant named Tyke was performing with Tarzan Zerbini Circus, “The elephant handler was observed beating the single-tusk African elephant in public to the point [where] the elephant was screaming and bending down on three legs to avoid being hit. Even when the handler walked by the elephant after this, the elephant screamed and veered away, demonstrating fear from his presence.” The handler was John Caudill (a.k.a. John Walker, current owner of Walker Bros. Circus), who admitted to “disciplining” Tyke after she hit Caudill’s brother and put a hole in his back with her tusk.

*Factsheet available.

**People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals • 501 Front St., Norfolk, VA
23510
757-622-7382 • PETA.org • Circuses.com**