



An elephant calf is trained at Ringling Brothers breeding center

PHOTO RINGLINGBEATSANIMALS.COM

AN ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS

Sarah, a 54-year-old Asian elephant performing for the Ringling Brothers Circus, collapsed in Anaheim Aug. 7. Ringling will bring its circus to Eugene Aug. 26-28, with four shows at Matthew Knight Arena, but as the circus draws near, Sarah the elephant's mishap has set off an intense debate about the cause of her fall, and in Eugene protesters say they plan to make their feelings about the abuse of circus animals known.

Ringling Brothers says Sarah fell while being loaded onto a rail car. Animal rights activists say stress and fatigue caused the fall. Sarah has suffered from a chronic condition since 1997, but she still performs.

Ringling is quick to defend its use of animals in the circus, saying it has never been found in violation of the USDA's Animal Welfare Act, but in fact Ringling Brothers has been cited multiple times, including a June 2011 repeat citation on Sarah for failing to provide adequate medical care for a pus-like discharge during urination. The senior veterinarian instructed handlers to flush Sarah's rectum twice a day, but the directions were not followed, according to the citation.

Cathy Carden, a Ringling elephant handler who travels with elephants Carol, Duchess and Patty, says the elephants are part of her family. "We make sure that the quality of life is the best that it can possibly be," she says. "The elephants travel very well." Carden says the animals like to look outside while they travel in the railcars. "They actually like it; it's their safe haven," she says. "They feel very safe and secure in there."

Local animal-lovers, outraged to learn the circus would be allowed to perform in Eugene, are planning a peaceful protest of the circus (see Activist Alert). They will hand out information to the public and have signs. "Because Ringling have such a great PR system, people don't realize all the abuse is happening," says Molly Sargent, who protested Ringling Brothers years ago in Seattle. "Once they learn about the real treatment of the animals, usually they think about it and maybe won't come back again."

The protest will be non-violent, and green-shirted legal observers and videographers will be present to support the animal-lovers' civil liberties as they support the wild animals in captivity.

Sargent says that using wild animals who can't be domesticated is a big part of the cruelty issue. "They're wild animals that are not allowed to do any of their normal wild behaviors that keep wild animals healthy and sane," she says. "They basically just go crazy, doing stereotypic behaviors, pacing and pacing." — *Shannon Finnell*

news Briefs

CLEAN UP VS. COVER UP

The waste site at Hanford in southern Washington, just across the Columbia River from Oregon, has been called one of the most contaminated places in the Western Hemisphere. The U.S. Department of Energy dumped nuclear waste into the area's soil up until 1995. Now USDOE and the Environmental Protection Agency are looking for ways to deal with the waste.

According to Gerry Pollet, executive director of the citizen advocacy group Heart of America Northwest (HOANW), there is enough plutonium in the soil at Hanford to make more than 70 atomic bombs.

The sites are also filled with radioactive cesium and massive quantities of toxic

chemical wastes used to process plutonium. Pollet said this waste could mobilize the plutonium and other wastes through the soil. Pollet added that the liquid waste sites, which are on Hanford's Central Plateau and above groundwater that flows into the Columbia River, would most certainly affect water that will be tapped for drinking and irrigation.

The USDOE said the plutonium left behind would stay put, and the agency proposed covering it up with dirt. The USDOE plans on digging up 15 feet of dirt beneath some of the disposal sites. But, according to Pollet, the agency only plans to dig up two feet at the worst sites, leaving half of the plutonium free to seep into groundwater and risk being dug up in any future excavations.

HOANW is advocating for a "clean up" of the area, not a "cover up."

"We believe plutonium and chemical wastes should be dug up," Pollet said. "The chemical wastes should be treated and sent to licensed hazardous waste disposal facilities, and the plutonium sent to a deep underground repository."

USDOE and EPA opened a public comment period, which runs until Sept.



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