



Carson & Barnes Circus

Carson & Barnes Circus (Hugo, Oklahoma, License 73-C-0001) has a long history of abysmal animal care and elephant rampages and has been repeatedly cited and fined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for violations of the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) including: using a bullhook with “excessive force” on an elephant; failure to provide veterinary care to numerous animals, including a thin elephant who had been losing weight for almost two years; failure to safely handle and supervise elephants in the presence of the public, including during elephant rides; failure to maintain control of elephants, resulting in at least two instances of elephants bolting from handlers; failure to provide animals with sufficient shelter and minimum space, and failure to maintain enclosures and transport vehicles in order to prevent injury to animals.

In 2016, the USDA assessed Carson & Barnes Circus a civil penalty of \$16,000 for multiple charges of failure to safely handle elephants, and in 2012 the circus paid a penalty of \$3,714 in a settlement agreement with the USDA for AWA violations.

Carson & Barnes Circus’s animal care director, Tim Frisco, was videotaped viciously attacking elephants with a bullhook, shocking elephants with an electric prod, and instructing trainers to embed sharp, metal hooks into the elephants’ flesh until the elephants screamed in pain.

March 28, 2021: An adult elephant attacked a visitor who was participating in an “elephant encounter” at the Endangered Ark Foundation, a roadside zoo in Hugo, Oklahoma. The EAF is operated by the owners of Carson & Barnes Circus and features elephants owned by Carson & Barnes circus. The visitor sustained “serious and life-threatening injuries” and was left disabled and disfigured.¹

June 10, 2018: While exhibiting elephants with Garden Bros. Circus, in Independence, Missouri, Carson & Barne’s Anthony Frisco was charged with failing to provide adequate care and shelter to two elephants who an Animal Services officer discovered standing in direct sunlight on hot asphalt and with no access to shade. The temperature was 89 degrees Fahrenheit.²

January 24, 2018: En route from Oklahoma to Iowa, the floor of a Carson & Barnes Circus trailer carrying four elephants began to give way, dragging on the road and sparking grass fires. The problem was noticed by another vehicle traveling behind the trailer. The elephants were stranded for approximately two hours along the side of a highway and one lane was blocked as the circus waited for another trailer to transport the elephants.^{3,4}

July 6, 2017: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for the previous week’s escape of the

elephant named Kelly (see June 30, 2017). The inspector wrote, “The elephant could have been injured or caused injury as it wandered unsupervised”.⁵

June 30, 2017: A Carson & Barnes Circus elephant named Kelly escaped from a barn at Circus World in Baraboo, Wisconsin, after another elephant, Isla, removed her leg chains and unfastened the door latch. Kelly crossed a river and walked through backyards in a residential neighborhood while consuming foliage. Circus officials were unaware Kelly had escaped until they were contacted by police approximately 20 minutes later. The police monitored the elephant for another 45 minutes while waiting for the trainer to arrive. Circus World leased the elephants from Carson & Barnes Circus for summer performances.^{6,7,8}

April 18, 2017: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for improper food storage. Two sacks of elephant feed were on the floor of a trailer that was damp from recent rain and a bottle of hand sanitizer was stored inside a bin for the food used for the goats, llamas and zebu.⁹

March 8, 2017: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for housing a llama in a stall with a broken window. The inspector wrote that the edges of exposed glass were “at the height of the llama’s head and within easy reach of the animal. This is a potential injury risk to the llama.”¹⁰

July 2, 2016: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to an elephant named Bunny, who appeared to have a problem with her right front leg. The inspector wrote, “During the performance [Bunny] would sometimes not bend her right carpal joint in the same manner as she uses her left limb,” and that Bunny sometimes extended the leg “in a peg-like fashion”. The exhibitor had not noticed that Bunny appeared to be having trouble with her leg.¹¹

May 25, 2016: The USDA assessed a civil penalty of \$16,000 against Carson & Barnes Circus to settle charges filed by the agency (see April 27, 2015) for two 2014 incidents that put both elephants and the public at risk.¹²

April 27, 2015: The USDA filed a complaint against Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to properly handle three elephants (Kelly, Viola, and Isa) when handlers lost control of the animals who subsequently ran into a parking lot, resulting in injuries to two of the elephants (see March 22, 2014), and for failure to properly handle elephants and provide sufficient distance and/or barriers between elephants and the public when three elephants (Kelly, Viola, and Isa) were given water in an area accessible to the public and a child and an adult were able to approach the elephants from behind and the adult photographed the child standing “at the back of and in direct proximity to the elephants.”^{13,14}

January 5, 2015: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to numerous animals including:¹⁵

- An elephant named Nina, who had been losing weight and was in thin body condition for almost two years and had lost 500 pounds, which was 8.7% of her body weight, in

the previous 7-8 months;

- Two elephants, Rosie and Opal, who were being treated with acupuncture for stiffness and/or arthritis by a person who was not trained by a veterinarian or accredited to perform acupuncture for veterinary purposes;
- A pygmy hippo named Katie, who was noted to be losing weight and not doing well while traveling for exhibition in May 2014. Katie was returned to the home facility and seen by a veterinarian, but there was no documentation that she received medication prescribed for her and she subsequently died apparently without having received regular monitoring of her condition or her weight;
- A llama named Bandit who had excessively overgrown hooves, causing his toes to curve to the sides, a problem that no one had noticed despite the fact that he was being treated for an eye problem.

September 9, 2014/Hope, Maine: The co-founder of the facility Hope Elephants sustained multiple fractures and compression of the chest, and subsequently died, after being stepped on by an elephant when he fell inside the animal's pen. The facility had two elephants, Rosie and Opal, who had been acquired two years previously from Carson & Barnes Circus. Following this incident, the elephants were returned to the circus.^{16,17}

April 14, 2014: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to properly handle three elephants (Kelly, Viola, and Isa) when the elephants were given water in an area accessible to the public and a child and an adult were able to approach the elephants from behind and the adult photographed the child standing "at the back of and in direct proximity to the elephants." The circus was performing as the Zembo Shrine Circus in Altoona, Pennsylvania.^{18,19}

March 22, 2014: While leaving the performance arena, three elephants (Kelly, Viola, and Isa) who belonged to Carson & Barnes Circus were spooked by noise from the ongoing show and escaped from their handlers. The elephants pushed through a door and exited into the parking lot. Kelly ran between two trailers, resulting in abrasions and lacerations on her right side, Viola sustained lacerations on both sides of her body, and two cars were damaged. The elephants were performing with the Royal Hanneford Circus in St. Charles, Missouri.^{20,21}

March 12, 2014: The USDA issued an official warning to Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to a llama who was thin and had a worsening eye condition (see December 17, 2013.)²²

December 17, 2013: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to a llama who was thin, had a poor hair coat, and had discharge from both eyes. In addition, the llama's right eye, which a veterinarian thought may have been punctured, was cloudy and reddened and had significantly worsened since the animal was last seen by a veterinarian more than a month previously. The circus was also cited for two enclosures that posed a risk of injury to the animals in them, as well as failure to have a sufficient number of adequately trained employees to identify the llama's worsening eye condition and the

potentially hazardous animal enclosures.²³

August 7, 2013: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide documentation that an elephant named Nina, who was observed to be thin, with visible hip bones and shoulder blades, had been seen by a veterinarian. Nina and an elephant named Margaret were performing and giving rides to the public at Circus World in Baraboo, Wisconsin.²⁴

January 9, 2013: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain facilities in good repair to protect the animals from injury. Enclosures housing goats, a zebu, and a zebra had loose and broken wires with sharp ends that protruded inward, a shelter for a zedonk and a donkey had a large hole in the concrete, and aluminum siding was pulled away from the wall of a shelter for two camels, creating a hole. All of these items posed a risk of injury to the animals.²⁵

August 2, 2012: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide elephants with a safe transport trailer. Three of the drainage holes in the wooden floor of the trailer had become enlarged and worn to the point that it threatened the structural integrity of the floor. The circus was performing in Minerva, Ohio.²⁶

July 26, 2012: Carson & Barnes Circus was assessed a penalty of \$3,714 in a settlement agreement with the USDA for numerous violations of the Animal Welfare Act including:^{27,28,29,30}

- Failure to maintain control of an elephant who bolted from handlers and was subsequently injured (see April 27, 2010);
- Failure to provide three elephants with shelter from cold rain;
- Failure to provide adequate containment for three elephants, thereby risking the safety of the animals and the public;
- Failure to provide a barrier or sufficient distance between elephants and the public, including when a member of the public was able to grab one elephant's trunk;
- Repeated failure to have elephants under direct control and supervision while the animals gave rides to the public;
- Failure to maintain an animal transport trailer that had a large hole in the floor at the entrance that could injure the animals as they walked over it;
- Failure to maintain the interior walls of the elephant barns in good repair and for sharp protruding edges of broken metal at the entryway to an elephant barn;
- A perimeter fence that had gaps as well as gates that did not close completely.

June 26, 2012: Carson & Barnes Circus received a Warning Notice from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture for failure to obtain a certificate of veterinary inspection for four elephants—Minnie, Nina, Libby, and Suzie—who were taken into the state.³¹

June 2012: As of June 2012, Carson & Barnes Circus' elephant named Minnie had tested positive for tuberculosis and was prohibited from having contact with the public when she was at the Circus World Museum for the summer.³²

April 27, 2012: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for repeated failure to provide a sufficient perimeter fence because three gates were damaged or not properly fitted and numerous sections of the fence had large gaps. The circus was also cited for failure to maintain a barn where a shift area for an adult male elephant named Colonel had sharp protruding edges of broken metal, which posed a risk of injury to the elephant.³³

April 9, 2012: The City Council of Bellevue, Nebraska, voted to reject a permit for Carson & Barnes Circus to perform on the grounds of Bellevue University. Council members expressed concern about the circus's numerous Animal Welfare Act violations as well as the risk to the community.³⁴

December 20, 2011: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain a barn that housed six Asian elephants. One wall of the barn had insulation that was damaged and missing in several places.³⁵

October 7, 2011: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for "many instances" when elephants were not under direct control and supervision while the animals gave rides to the public. In one instance, a handler exchanged money with another employee while the elephant walked away with passengers on her back. In another, only one handler was present for two elephants giving rides and the inspector wrote, "One elephant would walk approximately 25 feet away with passengers on board, while the one handler would assist in loading passengers on the second elephant. The elephant with the passengers would stop and stand at the curtain exit with no physical barrier, other than the curtain, to stop it from leaving." The inspector wrote that such actions "allows for the risk of serious injury to members of the public." The circus was performing as the Kelly Miller Circus in Troy, Illinois.³⁶

August 22, 2011: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate shade from direct sunlight to two bull elephants. The circus was also cited for failure to provide a sufficient perimeter fence because one gate was not properly fitted and was held closed with a rubber strap, another gate was open and unsecured, there were numerous gaps between the bottom of the fence and the ground, in at least one place a section of fence was not secured to any post, and one section of fence had broken barbed wire that was hanging loosely.³⁷

June 29, 2011: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus, whose elephants were performing with Cole Bros. Circus in Meriden, Connecticut, for:³⁸

- An elephant handler who was using a bullhook with "excessive force" on an elephant named Viola while she was giving rides to the public;
- Failure to provide a barrier or sufficient distance between the public and two elephants who were being bathed in a parking lot as well as two elephants in a ride area, where a member of the public grabbed a hold of one elephant's trunk and one elephant placed her trunk close to the man's feet and legs causing the inspector to write, "The safety of the elephant and the man were at risk in both of these situations;"

- Many instances when elephants who were giving rides to the public were not under the direct control and supervision of a handler, including when a handler answered his phone and walked away from an elephant who had an adult and six young children on her back;
- Failure to have a sufficient number of handlers when only one person was supervising two elephants.

June 17, 2011: A man and his son who stopped near a parking lot where Cole Bros. Circus was set up in Lanesboro, Massachusetts, witnessed a handler yelling at the elephants before striking one of them twice with “something that resembled a club,” producing a clearly audible “whack” sound. The handler swung the device as if it were a baseball bat. “This was not just an ‘attention getter,’” the father explained. “[This worker] reared back and swung the club with all his might, twice. You could hear the ‘whack’ as the club struck the elephant. My son and I were shocked.” The elephants involved in this incident belonged to Carson & Barnes Circus and were performing with Cole Bros. Circus.^{39,40,41}

2011: In early 2011, Carson & Barnes Circus’ elephant named Isla was determined to be infected with tuberculosis.⁴²

September 25, 2010: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide veterinary care to a pygmy hippo who had reddened and raw skin lesions that, the inspector wrote, could “easily become infected.” The circus was also cited for failure to provide any shade to goats, llamas, an alpaca, and a donkey when the temperature was more than 85 degrees; for feeding goats, llamas, alpacas, a zebra and a zebu by placing the animals’ hay on the ground, where it became contaminated with feces and the animals walked through it; and was cited again for failure to maintain a trailer that was used to transport a hippopotamus and numerous other animals which had an area where the vinyl liner had separated from the wall, exposing foam padding. The circus was performing in Colorado Springs, Colorado.⁴³

June 19, 2010: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain a trailer that was used to transport a hippopotamus, a zebra, camels, llamas, a zebu, an alpaca, and goats. The trailer had a hole that was at least 8 inches in diameter just inside the door through which the animals entered and exited. The inspector wrote, “This may lead to injury of the animals’ feet or legs if they stepped through the hole.” The circus was performing in Nashville, Tennessee.⁴⁴

May 12, 2010: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide shelter to three elephants - Lisa, Becky and Traci. The inspector wrote, “The weather was 50 degrees and drizzling rain for most of the day. The elephants were out in the cold rain with no protection from the inclement weather.” The circus was also cited for failure to provide sufficient fencing to safely contain the three elephants as well as for insufficient security measures to prevent public access to the elephants. The inspector wrote, “Without adequate containment, the animals and the public are at risk of injury.” The circus was performing in Roanoke, Indiana.⁴⁵

April 27, 2010: An elephant named Viola, who belonged to Carson & Barnes Circus, escaped while appearing with Cole Bros. Circus in Lynchburg, Virginia. She bolted from handlers and ran directly past a line of people waiting to buy tickets, sending some running toward the parking lot. Viola slid in the mud and tumbled down a hill and into a ditch, resulting in a cracked toenail and an inflamed shoulder. She was on the loose for approximately 30 minutes before being recaptured. The circus claimed that the elephant had been spooked by a rabbit.^{46,47,48,49}

April 2010: Isa, an elephant with Carson & Barnes Circus and traveling with Cole Bros. Circus, stepped on a trainer who sustained injuries that required a foot splint and crutches and kept him off work for a few days. The incident occurred while the circus was in Winchester, Virginia.⁵⁰

August 30, 2007: The USDA again cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to elephants when the results of tuberculosis testing on two of the three elephants were found to be invalid. The circus was also cited for failure to handle elephants in a manner that ensured minimal risk of harm to the animals and the public when the inspector observed that three elephants had been left unattended and there was a gap in the fence that surrounded the animals. The inspector wrote, “[I]t would have been very possible for a member of the public to enter the area and endanger both him- or herself and/or the animals.” The circus was performing in Schaghticoke, New York.⁵¹

July 12, 2007: Three elephants - Minnie, Susie, and Bunny - who were being leased from Carson & Barnes Circus and were performing with the Garden Bros. Circus in Newmarket, Canada, escaped from their enclosure in the middle of the night. Susie and Bunny roamed through downtown Newmarket, and Bunny was eventually found in a residential neighborhood.^{52,53}

June 6, 2007: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to three elephants who had not had foot care since February 2007. Becky had two cracked nails on each hind foot and a cracked nail on a front foot. Traci’s nails were unevenly trimmed, causing her to bear her weight unevenly. Lisa had a cracked nail on two feet. A 1.5-inch piece of fence wire was found in the hind foot of one of the elephants, and all three of them had rough cuticles.⁵⁴

June 5, 2007: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to have valid tuberculosis test results for three elephants. The inspector wrote, “Two of the three culture samples required for Isla and Opal were contaminated ... All three required culture samples for Isa were contaminated. These are not adequate to diagnose potential disease in these animals.” The circus was performing in Aurora, Colorado.⁵⁵

October 2, 2006: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to properly construct and maintain a dog enclosure so that it securely contained the animals. A portable enclosure for three small dogs had large spaces between the bars and was only 3.5 feet tall. One dog escaped from the pen during the inspection. The circus was performing in Clarksville, Virginia.⁵⁶

June 16, 2006: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to two elephants who had not had foot care since March 2006. Both Beckie and Tracie had two cracked nails on each hind foot. The inspector wrote that the cracks “extend[ed] up the nail to [approximately] ¼ inch from the cuticle.” According to *The Elephant’s Foot: Prevention and Care of Foot Conditions in Captive Asian and African Elephants*, cracked nails can lead to foot disorders that may result in serious disability or death. The circus’s elephants were performing with UniverSoul Circus in Landover, Maryland.⁵⁷

July 18, 2005: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to have its program of veterinary care available for inspection and failure to provide documentation that employees were tested for tuberculosis. The USDA requires that handlers who have direct contact with elephants be tested for tuberculosis at least annually in order to prevent the spread of the disease. The circus was performing in Farmington, Maine.⁵⁸

June 21, 2005: A U.S. District Court judge who viewed videotape of Carson & Barnes Circus’ animal care director Tim Frisco beating elephants with bullhooks and shocking them with electric prods (see December 27, 2002) described it as “troubling” and noted that it depicted conduct that violates the federal Animal Welfare Act.⁵⁹

May 26, 2005: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate shelter for elephants. The vinyl awning that was meant to provide the elephants with shelter from the sun and inclement weather had multiple holes in it. The circus was performing in Landover, Maryland.⁶⁰

August 16, 2004: The USDA issued Carson & Barnes Circus a \$550 stipulation for an accident that occurred while transporting elephants and resulted in injuries to two elephants.^{61,62}

May 28, 2004: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failing to provide an adequate safety barrier between the public and elephants. The circus was performing in Landover, Maryland.⁶³

April 12, 2004: Carson & Barnes Circus’s 5-year-old endangered Asian elephant named Jennie died after contracting an elephant herpes virus carried by African elephants. Despite widely accepted industry recommendations that Asian and African elephants should not be caged together because of disease risks from this deadly virus, Carson & Barnes continued to commingle the two species. In addition, the stress from being sent on the road at just 16 months of age, apparently without her mother, and being subjected to forceful training sessions, demanding performances, and constant travel likely compromised Jennie’s immune system and left her vulnerable to the infection.⁶⁴

June 27, 2003: Isla and Opal, two elephants with Carson & Barnes Circus, were injured when the semitrailer carrying them between shows in Minot and Beulah, North Dakota, overturned. The truck drifted off the highway and then tipped over. The fire department had to cut a large

hole in the truck's roof to extricate the elephants. Both animals sustained cuts from the accident and a patrol investigator described the truck as a total loss.⁶⁵

March 11, 2003: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain a trailer used to transport a hippo and numerous other animals. Rubber siding had been torn away from the wall and the floor of the trailer, posing a risk of the animals chewing on the rubber and exposing the wood floor of the trailer to water and excreta.⁶⁶

February 5, 2003: During an inspection at Carson & Barnes Circus's home site, the USDA noted that elephants Becky and Susie had cracked toenails. According to *The Elephant's Foot: Prevention and Care of Foot Conditions in Captive Asian and African Elephants*, cracked nails can lead to foot disorders that may result in serious disability or death.⁶⁷

January 24, 2003: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to document that a veterinarian visited the facility on a regular basis.⁶⁸

December 27, 2002: The USDA assessed a \$400 civil penalty against Carson & Barnes Circus after viewing video of the circus's animal care director Tim Frisco viciously attacking terrified elephants with a bull hook and shocking them with an electric prod. Frisco instructed other trainers to hurt the elephants until they scream, to forcefully strike the elephants with bull hooks, and to sink a bull hook into their flesh and twist it. Frisco also cautioned that the beatings must be concealed from the public. The circus entered into a settlement agreement and paid the \$400 fine for mishandling elephants in order to avoid formal charges of violating the Animal Welfare Act.^{69,70}

August 9, 2002: A Carson & Barnes Circus truck carrying two African elephants, Paula and Kristi, crashed in Rhinebeck, New York. The 18-wheeler tipped onto its side after the driver veered onto the right shoulder, which had a 4-foot drop-off. The state police, county sheriff's office, state Department of Environmental Conservation, village police, and village fire department all responded to the scene. The elephants were trapped in the overturned truck for approximately three hours while emergency workers used power tools to cut out a section of the roof in order to free them. The road was closed for five hours while crews cleared the wreckage and replaced a utility pole that was struck by the truck. Both elephants sustained abrasions and soreness. The driver was charged with having an uninspected trailer, an insufficient logbook, and failure to keep right. The accident occurred when the circus was en route from Rensselaer to Poughkeepsie, New York.^{71,72,73}

June 5, 2002: The USDA again cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to an African elephant named Paula who had several areas of skin that were dry and rough. The circus was in Chillicothe, Missouri.⁷⁴

May 14, 2002: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate veterinary care to an African elephant named Paula who had dead skin covering her back, ears,

and face. The circus was in Emporia, Kansas.⁷⁵

January 10, 2002: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide a sufficient perimeter fence around seven enclosures for big cats and around an enclosure for 19 elephants. The inspector also noted that the condition of the African elephant Paula's skin was not improving.⁷⁶

May 22, 2001: While performing in Perry, Iowa, and Webster City, Iowa, Carson & Barnes Circus was cited by the USDA for:⁷⁷

- Failure to provide veterinary care to a zebu with overgrown hooves;
- Failure to have 15 elephants under the direct control and supervision of a knowledgeable handler while children, parents, and teachers were present;
- Overworking a camel used to provide rides to the public;
- Failure to provide shelter to a pygmy hippopotamus, a zebu, a water buffalo, three llamas, 25 goats, and four camels during gusty and rainy weather conditions;
- Failure to provide minimum space to two African elephants who were confined to a 25'x25' area and a travel trailer for the two days of the inspection and to two Asian elephants who were chained by two legs for the same duration except for 20 minutes when they were performing;
- Failure to provide minimum space to six big cats who, except for the 20 minutes when they were performing, were confined to their travel cages;
- Allowing a dog to run loose in the parking lot and onto the property of an adjacent school;
- Improper storage of meat for the big cats.

January 30, 2001: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain the structural strength of its animal transport trailers.⁷⁸

September 2000: Carson & Barnes Circus leased a single elephant to Roberts Bros. Circus and a single elephant to Circus Vargas. Both elephants were kept in solitary confinement. The American Zoo and Aquarium Association's *Guide to Accreditation of Zoological Parks and Aquariums* states, "It is inappropriate to keep highly social female elephants singly."⁷⁹

August 24, 2000: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to have elephant attendants, handlers, and grooms tested for tuberculosis.⁸⁰

July 22, 2000: Carson & Barnes Circus was forced to cancel two shows in Anne Arundel County, Maryland, after fire officials deemed the circus's tent unsafe and because the circus did not have a permit to erect a tent. The tent failed the inspectors' flame-spread test for fire safety. Inspectors also found problems with exit lightings and signs.⁸¹

June 6, 2000: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for mishandling an elephant who was shackled with a leg chain that didn't have a protective covering.⁸²

October 13, 1999: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide sufficient space to two bears who were housed in enclosures that measured approximately 4½ feet by 4½ feet, as well as failure to store the bears' food and bedding in a manner that prevented contamination.⁸³

June 16, 1998: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain the transport trailer for big cats.⁸⁴

February 5, 1998: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes for failure to provide adequate housing for 12 dogs who were being kept outdoors; failure to maintain the elephant transport trailers which had holes in the roofs and loose metal on the walls; failure to maintain structurally sound fencing around exotic hoofed animals; and failure to provide adequate drainage in a muddy water buffalo enclosure.⁸⁵

October 28, 1997: The USDA again cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate ventilation in the elephant transport trailer. The circus was also cited for failure to provide veterinary care to elephants who had cracked nails and/or overgrown feet; failure to maintain transport trailers for tigers - who had water leaking into their trailer from a tank on top of the vehicle - a pygmy hippopotamus, llamas, goats, sheep, and other animals; failure to maintain records of acquisition for the elephants; and improper food storage.⁸⁶

July 1997: After an inspection of Carson & Barnes Circus in Colorado, a Marin Humane Society humane investigator stated that she found animals living in the "most appalling" conditions in her 14 years with the agency. The officer described elephants with boils the size of soccer balls, a hippopotamus without access to water, ponies and horses who were being ridden despite the fact that they had saddle sores, and snakes in extremely crowded cages.⁸⁷

May 28, 1997: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide adequate ventilation in the elephant transport trailers.⁸⁸

March 31, 1997: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to make necessary repairs to a tiger transport trailer. The inspector wrote, "One board on exit ramp for tiger trailer is becoming splintered and needs to be replaced to prevent injury to animals' feet." The circus was also cited for confining two dogs on short tethers and failure to have an exercise plan and required identification for the dogs.⁸⁹

October 15, 1996: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide veterinary care to elephants, more than half of who needed routine foot and nail care.⁹⁰

April 17, 1996: Carson & Barnes Circus received a letter from the USDA warning it to repair and/or replace the barrier fence in the area where elephants were chained and fed and which the circus had been cited for on two consecutive inspections (December 7, 1995 and March 4,

1996).⁹¹

April 11, 1996: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain the elephant transport trailer which had a hole in the metal on an inside wall.⁹²

March 4, 1996: The USDA again cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to repair a barrier fence in the area where elephants were chained and fed. The circus was also cited for failure to maintain elephant transport trailers as well as enclosures for lions and camels, all of which had holes in the walls and ceilings, and failure to maintain fencing in a camel enclosure.⁹³

December 7, 1995: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain cages used for tigers and lions, which had rusted walls; failure to maintain the zebra-donkey building, and failure to maintain a barrier fence around the area where elephants are chained and fed.⁹⁴

September 28, 1995: The USDA again cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain a tiger cage that had peeling paint and excessive rust.⁹⁵

August 16, 1995: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide veterinary care to an elephant named Paula who had an excessive buildup of dead skin, as well as to a pot-bellied pig with overgrown hooves; failure to dispose of expired medication; failure to provide llamas with shade; failure to provide clean water to a giraffe and zebra whose water receptacles had a buildup of algae; failure to maintain a tiger cage that had peeling paint; excessive clutter; and failure to maintain records.⁹⁶

May 8, 1995: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide minimum space and adequate exercise to an African elephant named Paula; failure to provide adequate ventilation in the trailers used to transport the elephants and to house them at night and during cold weather (two trucks had no ventilation holes and three trucks had only small openings) as well as the trailer used to transport the pot belly pigs; failure to provide big cats with sanitary drinking receptacles; failure to provide proper sanitation for a pygmy hippopotamus whose stall was being cleaned only three times per week; failure to update veterinary care records; failure to have the required identification for dogs; and improper food storage.⁹⁷

May 3, 1995: According to an affidavit given to a USDA investigator, a woman attending the circus with her daughter and a friend observed a Carson & Barnes Circus employee kick an elephant in the face and strike or stab two elephants with a pocket knife as the elephants tried to reach for hay, causing one elephant to scream and squeal.⁹⁸

February 23, 1995: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain cages and transport trailers for tigers, lions, ligers, and hoof stock.⁹⁹

February 1, 1995: A tiger escaped by squeezing through an opening in the cage she was in at the Carson & Barnes Circus winter quarters in Hugo, Oklahoma. The Choctaw County Sheriff

Department, Hugo Police Department, Game Department, and a helicopter from the National Guard searched for the tiger for 10 days before she was finally recaptured.^{100,101}

October 26, 1994: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide a sufficient number of handlers and adequate security to ensure the safety of animals and the public when children were able to run toward and touch an elephant who was being taken from the circus tent.¹⁰²

October 21, 1994: An elephant named Kay with the Carson & Barnes Circus “keeled over” and died while the circus was performing in Taylorville, Illinois. Kay had refused to eat or drink for several days. The 60-year-old elephant had not been retired even though she had a history of health problems and had had a kidney infection for approximately a year.¹⁰³

August 17, 1994: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for an incomplete program of veterinary care.¹⁰⁴

June 24, 1994: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to have an adequate veterinary care program; failure to have a safety barrier between the public and large animals including elephants, giraffes, and camels; failure to maintain an elephant transport trailer that had sharp and jagged edges and rusty holes; failure to have an exercise plan and the required identification for a dog; and improper food storage.¹⁰⁵

June 23, 1994: During Carson & Barnes Circus’s appearance in Kearney, Nebraska, two reporters observed an animal handler kick and curse at a pygmy hippopotamus as the animal was being moved into a transport truck, and saw another worker hit an elephant across the eye with a bullhook.¹⁰⁶

March 9, 1993: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to maintain the elephant barn, the roof of which was rusted and full of holes, for inadequate drainage in the giraffe pen, and for a filthy zebra pen.¹⁰⁷

October 7, 1992: The USDA cited Carson & Barnes Circus for failure to provide sufficient space to a pygmy hippopotamus, as well as a liger and tiger who were housed together, who were in enclosures so narrow that the animals were unable to turn around freely; failure to provide shelter from the elements to zebus, sheep, llamas, and zebra; inadequate pest control for the pygmy hippopotamus, who was plagued by swarms of flies; and failure to record veterinary treatment for a wounded rhinoceros.¹⁰⁸

1990: A giraffe with Carson & Barnes Circus died from a possible neck injury.¹⁰⁹

1989: A giraffe with Carson & Barnes Circus died of hypothermia.¹¹⁰

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- ¹ In the District Court of Oklahoma County, State of Oklahoma, Dana Garber, Plaintiff, vs. The Endangered Ark Foundation; Miller Equipment Company; Oklahoma Awesome Adventures; Carson & Barnes Circus Company; Geary, Barbara and Traci Byrd; Kristin Parra and Christian Loyal, Case No. CJ-2021-2705, November 23, 2021.
- ² City of Independence, Missouri, Independence Animal Services, Case Report, Case #:C04858143, June 11, 2018.
- ³ “Oklahoma circus has faced federal scrutiny,” Associated Press, January 25, 2018.
- ⁴ “Circus elephants stranded on highway, owner faces scrutiny,” Associated Press, January 25, 2018.
- ⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, July 6, 2017.
- ⁶ Jake Prinsen, “Elephant escapes from Circus World in Baraboo and strolls through neighborhood,” Madison.com, June 30, 2017.
- ⁷ Nancy Coleman, “Escaped elephant takes a stroll through Wisconsin neighborhood,” CNN, June 30, 2017.
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- ⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, April 18, 2017.
- ¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, March 8, 2017.
- ¹¹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, July 2, 2016.
- ¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Consent Decision and Order, Carson & Barnes Circus Company, Respondent, Docket No. 15-0103, May 25, 2016.
- ¹³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Complaint, Carson & Barnes Circus Company, Respondents, Docket No. 15-0103, April 27, 2015.
- ¹⁴ Leah Thorsen, “Moolah Circus organizers taking steps so elephants don’t get loose again,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 19, 2015.
- ¹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, January 5, 2015.
- ¹⁶ Eric Russell, “Co-founder of Maine sanctuary for elephants, killed in pen, apparently fell and was stepped on,” Press Herald, September 9, 2014.
- ¹⁷ Leslie Bridgers, “Two elephants to leave Maine after tragic death of caregiver,” *Press Herald*, September 10, 2014.
- ¹⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, April 14, 2014.
- ¹⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Complaint, Carson & Barnes Circus Company, Respondents, Docket No. 15-0103, April 27, 2015.
- ²⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Complaint, Carson & Barnes Circus Company, Respondents, Docket No. 15-0103, April 27, 2015.
- ²¹ Leah Thorsen, “Moolah Circus organizers taking steps so elephants don’t get loose again,” St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 19, 2015.
- ²² Official Warning, Violation of Federal Regulations, Violator: Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, March 12, 2014.
- ²³ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, December 17, 2013.
- ²⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, August 7, 2013.
- ²⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, January 9, 2013.
- ²⁶ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, August 2, 2012.
- ²⁷ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Settlement Agreement, Citation and Notification of Penalty, Carson & Barnes Circus Co., Inc., July 26, 2012.
- ²⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, May 12, 2010.
- ²⁹ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, June 19, 2010.
- ³⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Inspection Report, Carson & Barnes Circus, 73-C-0001, June 29, 2011.
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