

EUROGROUP FOR ANIMALS

Brussels, 30 August 2018

To: Tomislav Tolušić, Minister of Agriculture

Ulica grada Vukovara 78

10000 Zagreb

Cc: Željko Kraljičak, Secretary of the Minister of Agriculture

Luka Oman, President of Animal Friends Croatia

Reference: Use of Camelidae in circuses

Dear Minister Tolušić,

on behalf of Eurogroup for Animals, the leading Pan-European animal advocacy organisation representing 64 NGOs across Europe, I would like to express our concern for the continued use of camels and llamas in circuses performing in Croatia.

Croatia has been one of the first European countries to adopt a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, paving the way for many other Member States that have then adopted the same restrictions. Indeed, in recent years, there has been increasing doubt about the ethics of using live animals for public entertainment and this is reflected in the national legislation of an increasing number of countries in Europe and across the world.

Wild animals in circuses are bought and sold, prematurely separated from their mothers and then from herd members, confined or chained and forced to stand for hours and frequently moved in small compartments on trains or trucks. They are required to perform behaviours never seen in nature. The circus experience has nothing to do with the reality of the wild animals' life and behaviour. Wild animals that have been bred for tens of generations in captivity still show extremely high motivation to perform the behaviour typical of their wild counterparts.

Members of the *Camelidae* family, and in particular the species of Bactrian camels (*Camelus bactrianus*), dromedaries (*Camelus dromedaries*) and llamas (*Lama glama*) are often used in circuses. These species are sometimes considered domestic, yet

many experts have raised concerns over their process of domestication. Several studies argue that there is not enough evidence to support the camel domestication¹, even though there are some small genetic differences between wild ancestors and the current camel population. Morphologically and physiologically “domestic” individuals are equal to their wild ancestors, and therefore it can be assumed that their behavioural needs are the same, in particular regarding their nomadic lifestyle to which they are still adapted² and that can’t obviously be performed in circuses. In addition, camels and llamas used in circuses are forced to perform tricks that have nothing to see with their natural behaviour, then contradicting the requirements of Art. 59(2) of the Croatian Animal Protection Act.

For all of the above mentioned reasons, we strongly encourage you to prohibit the use of species belonging to the Camelidae family in circuses.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Eurogroup for Animals.

Yours sincerely,



Reineke Hameleers

Director, Eurogroup for Animals



Dr Elena Nalon

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for Animals

¹ M. Zeder, “Pathways to animal domestication”, in Biodiversity in agriculture: domestication, evolution, and sustainability, 1st ed., P. Gepts, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 227-257

² Eurogroup for Animals, “Statement on ethological needs and welfare of wild animals in circuses”, 2015.