Time for Animal Free Circuses

Circuses must be places that showcase the spirit of human physical strength, endurance and excellence to gymnastic ability and not torture dens where human beings come to witness a macabre spectacle of sick and injured animals nervously forced to perform under fear of a stick, whip or ankush. In September 2013, PETA India completed a nine month long investigation that explored the condition of animals in India’s circuses. The investigation included inspections of the Amar Circus, the Gemini Circus, the Great Bombay Circus, the Great Champion Circus, the Great Golden Circus, the Jamuna Circus, the Jumbo Circus (Unit 1), the Jumbo Circus (Unit 2), the Kohinoor Circus, the Metro Circus, the Moonlight Circus, the Rajakmal Circus, the Rambo Circus, the SAM Circus, the Great Prabhath Circus and the Great Royal Circus. Only one circus – Great Champion Circus was free of the use of the animals. Each one of the circuses investigated revealed that the animals were subjected to severe cruelty.

The PETA investigation revealed, “ Rampant use of weapons, including iron hooks with knife-like ends (ankushes), sticks with protruding nails, whips and clubs. Several animals were seen with fresh bleeding wounds and injuries from the use of weapons”. “Violation of The Protection of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960; the Performing Animals Rules, 1973; and the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 was noticed in almost all the circuses. One of thecircuses investigated revealed that the animals were subjected to severe cruelty.”

The findings of the investigations have been summarized as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Species</th>
<th>Nature of Cruelty</th>
<th>Extent of Cruelty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elephants</td>
<td>Percentage of elephants tethered by two or three legs</td>
<td>97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camels</td>
<td>Percentage of camels with capped knees, elbows, stifle joints or hocks.</td>
<td>Over 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horses</td>
<td>Percentage of equines suffering from overgrown and uncut hooves.</td>
<td>Over 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dogs</td>
<td>Percentage of performing dogs not given the regular exercise.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td>Percentage of smaller birds such as macaws, cockatoos and parrots whose feathers were clipped to prevent them from flying.</td>
<td>99%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percentage of inspected birds’ cages that didn’t have appropriate furnishing (tree branches), enrichment artefacts and sand.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Stunts not registered with AWBI</td>
<td>Percentage of inspected circuses that forced animals to perform stunts that were not registered with AWBI.</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement registers for elephants</td>
<td>Percentage of circuses with elephants registered that could not produce movement registers for their elephants.</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

He said that, “Abandoning retired race horses has brought disgrace not only to the owners of these horses but has also tarnished the image of Turf Clubs where these horses have been racing in the past”. Shri Shivlal Daga said, “It is a matter of great shame that Race horses are being abandoned on the roads. The Turf authorities must intervene and decide a policy as per the commitment given to Govt. of India in 2001. Strong action must be taken by the Turf Clubs in this matter”. Mrs. Bakhtawar Chenoy said that Clubs are enforcing early retirement policy of race horses and as such it should be the responsibility of the Turf Clubs to provide for the welfare of the retired race horses. She added that, about the 0.5% of stake money is being collected by RWITC for the welfare of the race horses. Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI asked as to how the fund is being utilized to address the welfare concerns of retired race horses. The Secretary, Royal Western India Turf Club replied that the funds were being given to Animal Welfare NGOs. The Chairman wanted to know the details of funds given to the NGOs so as to check on its utilization from the NGOs.

Secretary, Hyderabad Race Club said, “In Hyderabad, we have a separate centre where old and retired race horses are taken care of”. Secretary, HRC informed the Board that the HRC has been deducting 0.5% of stake money earned by the Race Horse Owners from the year Oct 2003 onwards towards animal welfare. ARetired Race Horse Welfare Society has been established at HRC in September 2008 and 0.5% of stake money has been utilized for taking care and maintenance of the retired race horses having no homes.

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI mentioned that in Gurgaon there is a Donkey Sanctuary having almost 30 acres of land where some retired race horses could be accommodated. He informed that in UK, quite a significant amount of contribution for equine welfare come from the donations made by Jockeys and the Turf Clubs. He suggested making a revolving fund managed by TAI to address this serious concern of abandoning of Race Horses. He also suggested that some of the retired race horses could be given to some of the good schools for their riding clubs either free or for a very nominal charge. It was agreed that those Turf Clubs who are not presently collecting any money for the welfare of retired race horses from the stake money should refer back this issue to their management committees for implementing the 0.5% cut from the stake money for race horse welfare. Mr. Cyrus Madan added that even if 0.5% of the revenue generated from horse racing is collected and kept aside for the welfare of retired race horses, that would suffice.

With best wishes,

Maj Gen (Retd) Dr. R. M. Kharb, AVSM
Illegal Transport of Cattle Racket Busted In Jaipur

Jaipur: On 27th August, 2013, around 4.30 pm, 15 trucks were seen near Vijaypath Junction on New Sanganer Road, Jaipur, illegally transporting a large number of cattle. All the trucks were heavily overcrowded with the cattle suffering severe injuries. The transportation was in strict violation of the PCA Act, 1960 and the Transportation of Animals (Amendment) Rules, 2009.

The vehicles with the truck numbers (as given in the adjacent table) were found to be carrying a large number of cattle. A report was filed at the Shiprapath Police Station in South Jaipur by Shri Om Prakash Meena and custody was taken of all the cattle in the trucks which were then sent to Hingonia Gaushala that is being run by the Jaipur Municipal Corporation. A total of 439 cattle were rescued and four cattle were reported dead on arrival at Hingonia Gaushala.

Shri Shivlal Daga observed that, “No steward is going to bring a whip mark to the attention of the Vets. When there is excessive whipping, the Vets need to be alert and take note of the whip marks and bring it to the notice of the Turf Club so that necessary action can be taken. I am not just an inspector but also a steward. I know both sides of the situation.” Ms. Ros Craig Jones said, “Since the world of international racing is moving away from use of whips in racing, why can’t we start an initiative and have no whips in maiden races, the jockeys will carry their whips for safety, and not use them?” Shri Shivlal Daga noted that, “Clubs must follow the rules, no whipping beyond 8 times, not hitting a horse which is winning easily or when out of contention and not raising the arm above shoulder height. Penalties need to be enforced, and reciprocated by all Clubs”.

Secretary, Hyderabad Race Club informed the Board that HRC takes serious view of excessive whipping and the erring professionals are penalized. He said, “Whipping is not allowed more than 8 times in a race. If the jockey commits the offence 4th time during the meeting, the whip will be withdrawn for the remaining period of the meeting and the withdrawal of the whip may be carried forward to the next meeting at the discretion of the Stewards. Using whip arm above shoulder height is not allowed”.

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI noted that, “The Turf Clubs must implement the Whip Rule strictly and should uniformly honour the White penalties given to the defaulting Jockeys. I appreciate the RWITC initiative to have some races without the use of whips. The day is not far when use of whips in racing will be totally banned. Let us start preparing for such an eventuality. In the meanwhile the following malpractices with regard to use of whip must be stopped:

- Using the whip with excessive force to the extent of causing injury.
- Using the whip with the arm above shoulder height.
- Using the whip on a horse which is showing no response.
- The continued use of the whip on a horse after its chance of winning or being placed is clearly gone.
- The unnecessary use of the whip on a horse that has clearly won its race or has obtained its maximum placing.
- Using the whip on a horse which is past the winning post.
- Using the whip on the flank of the horse.
- Using the whip more than 8 times.
- Using the whip on any part of the horse’s head or in the vicinity of the head”.

Inhumane Handling of Race Horses under Training and Racing

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI stressed that thoroughbred horses are very sensitive and intelligent animals and need to be treated in a humane manner during training. Authorised Inspecting officials and officials of the Turf Clubs must ensure that strict action is initiated against those using inhumane methods during training of race horses.

Submission of Reports by the Turf Clubs to AWBI

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI stressed that it is the official obligation of Turf Clubs to adopt self reporting system in confirmed cases of Doping / use of prohibited substances in Race Horses within 24 hours of the occurrence to AWBI. Designated Govt. He added that, “Authorised Inspectors shall be provided with all relevant documents of the incidence of doping by the Turf Clubs and they should be made part of adjudication of the proceedings of the drug abuse. Each Turf Club is required to submit a quarterly report on welfare issues of Race Horses to AWBI”.

Appointment of Animal Welfare Inspectors

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI announced that few more Animal Welfare Inspectors will be appointed soon in those racing centres where no inspectors are present.

Hon’ble Chairman, AWBI concluded the meeting thanking the Turf Clubs warmly for making donations for the Board’s Golden Jubilee celebrations. He showed the participants the copy of the Souvenir that was released by Hon’ble Governor during the 2nd Regional Seminar on Animal Welfare held in Jaipur in April, 2013. Sharing with all the participants in the meeting that the topic on which he had spoken was “Welfare Concerns of Working Equines”. He said that, “India has 1 million working equines and they are contributing to sustaining the livelihood of a large number of people. Working horses are force multipliers in Police, Army and Para Military forces”.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.
The Animal Welfare Board of India is an umbrella of the SPCAs/AWOs and Animal Welfare Workers. The Board encourages Animal Welfare activities, advises the Central and State Governments on issues relating to Animal Welfare, particularly the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and also helps to formulate Animal Welfare Policies / Legislations.

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