

# ANIMALS IN CIRCUSES IN VIETNAM

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# FOREWORD



Animals Asia investigations have revealed that hundreds of animals – including endangered species – are housed in poor living conditions and forced to perform unnatural, humiliating tricks at captive wild animal facilities across Vietnam.

These shows are aimed at children, promoting a message that animal abuse and exploitation in Vietnam continue to be acceptable.

Vietnamese civil society and the Vietnamese government have made great strides in recent years to protect animals from suffering, yet these circus operations remain a relic of the past and facilities continue to profit from the mistreatment of animals in the name of entertainment.

Wildlife trafficking is a major concern with the origin of many circus animals – including macaques, elephants and bears – mostly undocumented.

In compiling this report we have seen animals performing who are clearly carrying injuries, animals who are dangerously underweight, animals showing signs of self harm and animals cowering as a trainer approaches with a whip.

And far from animated crowds we've seen poor turnouts and bored attendants.

The animal circus industry in Vietnam is clearly in decline and we encourage the authorities to continue to support facilities to transition away from animal use.

Today's animal circuses could yet be replaced by non-animal alternatives showcasing the very best in human acrobatic displays. Acrobatic performances are based on the skill and the physical fitness of the performers and have become the circus act of choice for many millions of people across the world, replacing the use of animals.

Such displays will quickly become a popular attraction as visitors look towards new forms of entertainment, bringing additional people and revenue to current venues.

Vietnamese people have already shown their commitment to protecting animals, it is time for this particular industry to be relegated to the history books as it has been in many countries internationally.

## ABBREVIATIONS

**CITES:** Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

**FPD:** Forest Protection Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development

**SEAZA:** South East Asian Zoological Association

**VZA:** Vietnamese Zoological Association

**WAZA:** World Association of Zoos and Aquariums

## GLOSSARY

**CITES Appendices:** Appendices I, II and III to the Convention are lists of species afforded different levels or types of protection from over-exploitation in international trade.

Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid use incompatible with their survival.

The Conference of the Parties (CoP), which is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention and comprises all its Parties, has agreed in Resolution Conf. 9.24 (Rev. CoP17) on a set of biological and trade criteria to help determine whether a species should be included in Appendices I or II. At each regular meeting of the CoP, Parties submit proposals based on those criteria to amend these two Appendices. Those amendment proposals are discussed and then submitted to a vote. The Convention also allows for amendments by a postal procedure between meetings of the CoP (see Article XV, paragraph 2, of the Convention), but this procedure is rarely used.

- Appendix I lists species that are the most endangered among CITES-listed animals and plants. They are threatened with extinction and CITES prohibits international trade in specimens of these species except when the purpose of the import is not commercial; for example, when it is for scientific research. In these exceptional cases, trade may take place provided it is authorised by the granting of both an import permit and an export permit (or re-export certificate). Article VII of the Convention provides for a number of exemptions to this general prohibition.
- Appendix II lists species that are not necessarily currently threatened with extinction but may become so unless trade is closely controlled. It also includes so-called “look-alike species”, ie, species whose specimens in trade look like those of species listed in Appendix I. International trade in specimens of Appendix-II species may be authorised by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate. No import permit is necessary for these species under CITES (although a permit is needed in some countries that have taken stricter measures than CITES requires). Permits or certificates should only be granted if the relevant authorities are satisfied that certain conditions are met, above all that trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild.
- Appendix III lists species that are included at the request of a Party that already regulates trade in the species and that needs the cooperation of other countries to prevent unsustainable or illegal exploitation. International trade in specimens of species listed in Appendix III is allowed only on presentation of the appropriate permits or certificates.

### **CITES Management Authority –**

A national management body designated in accordance with Article IX of the CITES Convention. The Management Authority is responsible for implementing the CITES Convention in its country. In particular, it is the only body competent to grant import and export permits and re-export certificates on behalf of that Party. Even though a Party may designate more than one Management Authority, one must be designated as the Management Authority responsible for communication with other Parties and the Secretariat

### **CITES Scientific Authority –**

A national scientific advisory body designated in accordance with Article IX of the CITES Convention. A Scientific Authority is responsible for providing technical and scientific advice to its Management Authority, in particular as to whether the export or introduction from the sea of a specimen will be detrimental to the survival in the wild of the species involved. A Party may designate more than one Scientific Authority.

## REVIEW METHODOLOGY

A comprehensive review of Vietnamese captive wild animal facilities was carried out to ascertain:

- the use of animals in circus performances
- the origin of these individuals
- the management of these animals within specific facilities

The research identified 17 facilities using animals in circus performances in Vietnam.

### **Information was obtained via:**

- 1) Information in the public domain
- 2) Site visits to facilities
- 3) Information supplied by individuals working within the circus industry

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Seventeen facilities in Vietnam have been identified as using animals in circus performances as of September 2021. Fifteen different species were identified, with the most common 'circus' animal being the macaque used at 11 facilities.

Group IB species were seen in circus performances. Endangered species within Vietnam are protected from commercial exploitation under Vietnamese law, and their continued use in circuses presents a serious concern.

The origin of many wild animals used in circus performances in Vietnam is also of concern, information supplied to investigators has implied that many animals are being held in circuses illegally.

The welfare of animals used in circuses in Vietnam is often very poor. Animals are being forced through fear and intimidation to perform unnatural behaviours, and being held in poor living conditions. No national government regulations exist to protect these animals from conditions which cause them suffering, and it is believed that many hundreds of animals are suffering due to such conditions. Individual animals are suffering further due to their removal from their parents when they are very young to be used in animal interactions and shows.

Circuses are also doing little to contribute to the public's awareness of the nature of wild animals or the threats wild populations face. Some facilities are providing the public with misleading and, in some cases, inaccurate information, and the continued use of animals as entertainers is doing little to generate respect and empathy for species that are, in many cases, threatened with extinction in the wild.

Vietnam's participation in the use of animals as entertainers, some of whom are thought to be held illegally, and the housing of animals within poor living conditions, is having a negative impact on the international image of the country for its ability to protect threatened populations of wild animals and to protect individuals from suffering.

In recent years, the Vietnamese authorities and facility owners have committed to end the continued use and abuse of wild animal species in circus shows, this commitment must now be strengthened and facilities supported to end the use of all animals in circus shows across the country.

*Animals are being forced through fear and intimidation to perform unnatural behaviours, and being held in poor living conditions.*



# RECOMMENDATIONS







The author recommends the governing authorities responsible for the management of captive wild animals and the management of performing arts in Vietnam adopt the following measures:

1. Investigate and ascertain the origin of all protected species, under decree 06/2019/ND-CP, used in circuses. Confiscate and place with a reputable rescue facility those animals deemed to be held illegally
2. Investigate all circus operations for valid permits and certificates
3. Prosecute circus owners deemed to be in contravention of Vietnamese law with regards to the use of a class IB and IIB species for commercial exploitation, Article 4.1, 5.1, 12.1 and 12.2 Decree 06/2019/ND-CP
4. Prosecute circus owners deemed to be in contravention of Vietnamese law with regards to the quarantining of animals being transported between provinces, Article 51, Law on Animal Health 79/2015/QH13 and Article 4 and 16, Circular No.25/2016/TT-BNNPTNT
5. Ban the use of animals in performances where animals are forced to exhibit behaviour contrary to their natural behaviours
6. In partnership with both government and non-government managed captive wild animal facilities, confiscate circus animals and place them into established facilities
7. Provide resources and training support to such establishments to ensure they have the funds and the necessary skills available to meet the complex physical and behavioural needs of these rescued animals
8. Provide support for circus operators to adapt to non-animal circuses
9. Develop public awareness campaigns to show support to circuses that do not use animals, and to provide the public with information on the conservation and welfare issues associated with the use of animals in circuses.

# CIRCUSES IN VIETNAM

Seventeen facilities are known to use wild animals in circus performances in Vietnam (appendix one). These consist of three purpose built circus venues, eight amusement parks, two tourist resorts and five travelling circuses.<sup>1</sup>

## Circus venues and amusement parks

Ho Chi Minh City hosts a static circus at Gia Định Park and a circus show at Dam Sen Tourist Park.

Hanoi has dedicated circus arenas hosting the Hanoi Central Circus and the Vietnam Circus and Vaudeville Secondary School. Bao Son Paradise Park and Baaza Tuan Chau Eco-Park also operate wild animal circus shows in Hanoi.

Further wild animal circuses operate in facilities within Ba Ra – Vung Tau, Binh Dinh, Can Tho, Khanh Hoa, Kien Giang, and Quang Ninh Provinces.

Bao Son Paradise Park, Dam Sen Tourist Park, Quy Nhon Zoo, Vin Pearl (Nha Trang) and Vin Pearl (Phu Quoc) are members of the VZA. The VZA is a member of the SEAZA and both the VZA and SEAZA are also members of the WAZA.

WAZA have an established animal welfare policy<sup>2</sup> prohibiting the use of animals in entertainment practices where animals are forced to perform unnatural behaviours. This policy is mirrored within both the SEAZA<sup>3</sup> and VZA<sup>4</sup> membership policies and thus the continued use of animals in circuses at these facilities is in breach of the association policies.

## Travelling circuses

Five travelling circuses using wild animals continue to operate across the country. The largest is the Hong Loc Circus, established in 2004 by Le Hong Loc in partnership with the Vietnam Circus Association.

Hanoi Central Circus is also operating an active<sup>5</sup> travelling circus using wild animals.

<sup>1</sup> Hanoi Central Circus static circus venue and Hanoi Central Circus travelling circus are classified as one facility

<sup>2</sup> WAZA Animal Welfare Strategy p72 'Do not undertake, contribute or participate in animal shows, displays or interactive experiences where animals perform unnatural behaviours. Species conservation should be the overriding message and/or purpose'

<sup>3</sup> SEAZA Code of Welfare & Ethics states - The following actions are those that SEAZA believes are unacceptable and prevent the application of the principles that the Animal Welfare Certification Standard will promote. 'Animal demonstrations and animal-visitor interactions that are detrimental to the physical or psychological well-being of the animals and do not respect an animal's dignity'

<sup>4</sup> VZA unanimously considers the following actions to be unacceptable and impedes the assessment of animal welfare - Animal performances and interactions between animals and visitors that are harmful to the physical or psychological health of animals and the disrespect of animals

<sup>5</sup> Hanoi Central Circus was reported to have travelled to Nghe An, Dong Nai, Binh Duong, Da Nang, and Nha Tran, performing circus shows in 2019 and 2020



### Tourist resorts

Two tourist resorts host wild animal circuses. My Khanh in Can Tho province and Long Phu Corporation in Khanh Hoa. Long Phu Corporation is a member of the VZA and thus should abide by the VZA policies which prohibit the use of animals in circuses.

### Performing animals to rent

Many online companies linked to established circus operators continue to offer performing animals for rent, including dogs, monkeys<sup>6</sup> and pythons.<sup>7</sup> These animals are used for public events and parties.

### Comment

Circuses in Vietnam are facing competition from other animal related businesses such as zoos and safari parks as well as the development of non-animal related entertainment complexes. As competition has grown, several circuses, including Hong Loc Circus company, Phuong Nam Art Theatre and Hanoi Central Circus, have changed their business strategies to survive, developing contracts with amusement parks and tourist attractions as well as travelling circus operations.

### Performance animals and behaviours

A host of animal species are used in Vietnamese circus performances (appendix one). Macaques are the most popular, found at 11 of 17 facilities. Bears continue to be used by the Hong Loc travelling circus and the Long Phu Corporation.

Long Phu Corporation is the only remaining facility in Vietnam continuing to use an elephant in their circus performances, this follows an end to the use of performing elephants in the Hanoi Central Circus in 2020.

Vietnamese circuses are also known to use gibbons, crocodiles, dogs, buffaloes, cats, snakes, goats, seals, sea-lions, macaws, dolphins, doves, chickens, pigs and cockatoos.

### Macaques

Sixty five per cent of facilities exhibit performing macaques. At facilities investigated, the macaques were restrained by chains around their necks. In many cases individuals were forced to ride bicycles, perform rice grinding activities, and perform acrobatics.

Macaques at Long Phu Corporation, Hong Loc circus and My Khanh venues are also chained to dogs and raced, and forced to race each other in a swimming pool.

### Asiatic black bears

Asiatic black bears continue to be used by the Hong Loc travelling circus and Long Phu Corporation. Bears used in circuses are generally muzzled with a rope attached to the back of the muzzle, and the rope is pulled to force the bears to comply.

Bears are forced to ride bicycles, balance on a wooden board on top of a cylindrical object and perform acrobatic tricks.

### Elephants

Long Phu Corporation is the only facility continuing to exhibit a performing elephant in Vietnam. The elephant is controlled using sharp jab sticks, and ropes pierced through her ears. She is forced into standing on her head, and carrying performers and audience members in her trunk.

### Dolphins

Twenty four per cent of facilities exhibit dolphins. Dolphins perform various tricks and trained behaviours, and visitors can pay to have their photographs taken and have close contact interactions.

<sup>6</sup> <https://sukienviet.vn/bieu-dien-xiec/bieu-dien-xiec-khi/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://velaparty.com/san-pham/thue-xiec-khi-tai-tphcm/>

# ANIMAL SOURCE AND LEGALITY OF USE



Under Vietnamese law, Asiatic black bears, Asian elephants, gibbons and Siamese crocodiles are classified as group IB species within Decree 06/2019/ND-CP<sup>8</sup> (appendix two). All five macaque species found in Vietnam, and the Burmese python, short-tailed python and reticulated pythons are all classified as group IIB.

Article 4.1 of decree 06, states that group 1B species are strictly prohibited from exploitation and use for commercial purposes. Despite this, three<sup>8</sup> facilities continue to use group 1B species for commercial exploitation in circus shows.

Article 5.1 of decree 06 states that activities such as exploiting, caging, possessing and transporting endangered, precious and rare forest animals shall not have an adverse effect on the conservation of such species in nature. It is the opinion of the author that many of the bears used in circus performances have been captured from the wild, and circus staff have confirmed this through personal communications with investigators.<sup>9</sup>

Wild caught bear cubs are illegally traded in Vietnam for the bear bile trade,<sup>10</sup> and established breeding centres, including Vietnamese zoos, have had little success in breeding Asiatic black bears in captivity. It is reasonable to assume that the information provided by the circus staff is correct and some of the bears used in circuses have been captured from the wild, or will be the offspring of wild caught parents, and thus these facilities are in contravention of Article 5.1.

***Wild caught bear cubs are illegally traded in Vietnam for the bear bile trade, and established breeding centres, including Vietnamese zoos, have had little success in breeding Asiatic black bears in captivity.***

This assumption is further supported by the confiscation of two wild born Asiatic black bear cubs by the Hanoi FPD from the Hanoi Central Circus in April 2019.<sup>11</sup>

The elephant at Long Phu Corporation was transferred from an owner in Dak Lak province where elephants were historically captured from the wild to be used in the forestry and subsequently the tourism industry. It is also known that both the Hoang Nam Circus and Hanoi Central Circus have previously displayed wild caught elephants.<sup>12</sup>

It is thus the opinion of the author that the use of wild caught elephants in circus shows is also in contravention of article 5.1, decree 06.

Articles 12.1 and 12.2 of Decree 06 state that animals listed in Appendix I and Appendix II of CITES (this includes all species listed as IB and IIB under Vietnamese Law) can only be exploited for scientific research, for initial stocks for breeding or for foreign affairs purposes according to the Prime Minister's decision. Appendix II species can also be exploited for sustainable commercial purposes.

Their use in circus performances is not listed and therefore the use of Appendix I and II listed species, including Asiatic black bears, bottlenose dolphins, asian elephants, all macaque species, Siamese crocodiles and python species, in such performances contravenes the conditions within these articles.

CITES records document the import of 39 bottlenose dolphins into Vietnam since 2008 (appendix three). Thirty-three of these are reported as wild caught individuals from Japan. Their use in circus performances is thus in contravention of article 12.2 of decree 06 as circus performances are not a sustainable commercial use of a listed species.

Circus operators that travel across Vietnam to carry out their activities must also have the necessary legal documents, including quarantine certificates, for animals transported between provinces, as stated in Article 30 of Decree 06.

Circus owners must also adhere to the regulations in Article 51, Law on Animal Health 79/2015/QH13 (appendix four) and Article 4 and 16, Circular No.25/2016/TT-BNNPTNT dated 30 June 2016 (appendix five) which states that owners of animals participating in performances must have information on the origin and disease status of their animals, and must quarantine their animals both before and after transportation.

Evidence<sup>13</sup> suggests that some travelling circus operators are contravening these regulations and moving Group IB and IIB species around the country without the legal documentation as required under Article 30, decree 06 and Article 51, Law on Animal Health.

<sup>8</sup> Hong Loc Circus, Long Phu Corporation, Vinpearl Safari Phu Quoc

<sup>9</sup> Central Circus, Hanoi

<sup>10</sup> Davis, E. O., Glikman, J. A., Crudge, B., Dang, V., Willemsen, M., Nguyen, T., O'Connor, D., & Bendixsen, T. (2019). Consumer demand and traditional medicine prescription of bear products in Vietnam. *Biological Conservation*, 235, 119–127.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.animalsasia.org/uk/media/news/news-archive/two-endangered-moon-bear-cubs-safe-in-sanctuary-after-rescue-from-vietnamese-circus.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.elephant.se/country.php?name=Vietnam&show=circus>

<sup>13</sup> <http://dtinews.vn/en/news/023001/55120/vietnam-circus-federation-struggles-to-deal-with-fake-performers.html>

# ANIMAL WELFARE

Animals used for circus entertainment in Vietnam are managed in a variety of different ways and forced to perform unnatural behaviours. In many situations, their use as circus entertainers and the methods with which they are managed are likely to negatively affect their welfare.

An animal's "welfare" refers to the feelings and sensations the animal experiences within itself. These "feelings and sensations" are known as affective states (appendix six).<sup>14,15</sup>

An animal can be said to be experiencing "negative" welfare when it is experiencing negative affective states, e.g., fear, hunger, pain. These are states that the animal is motivated to minimise.

An animal can be said to be experiencing 'positive' welfare when it is experiencing positive affective states, e.g., confidence, comfort, reward. These are states the animal is motivated to experience.

Circus owners and animal keepers are often inadequately trained or equipped to provide animals with the care they require, and have little or no training in animal welfare or husbandry.



<sup>14</sup> Mellor, D. J., & Reid, C. S. W. (1994). Concepts of animal well-being and predicting the impact of procedures on experimental animals. *Improving the Well-Being of Animals in the Research Environment*, 3–18.

<sup>15</sup> Mellor, D. J., & Beausoleil, N. J. (2015). Extending the 'Five Domains' model for animal welfare assessment to incorporate positive welfare states. *Animal Welfare*, 24(3), 241–253.

## Performances

Animals in Vietnamese circuses are forced to perform a variety of unnatural behaviours to public audiences. Behavioural and physiological parameters indicate that human audiences can have stressful effects on captive wild animals, and that this can have severe consequences for welfare.<sup>16,17</sup>

Loud music, and in the case of the large static circuses, crowd noise in Vietnamese circuses is very high. Loud noise is a known stressor, and acoustical stress within and outside the human hearing range can cause critical alteration in physiological parameters.<sup>18,19,20</sup> This, coupled with the constant changes in lighting, and in some cases the use of spotlights on animals, is likely to cause excessive stress during each performance. Performance acts in the presence of spectators are likely to cause severe stress even if an animal is not engaged in unnatural behaviours.

Several animals in Vietnamese circuses have been observed displaying abnormal behaviours. Stereotypic weaving and rocking was observed with captive bears at Hanoi Central Circus and Long Phu Corporation (Monkey Island). Stereotypies typically indicate captive environments that compromise animal welfare, and they may even reflect specific forms of brain dysfunction.<sup>21</sup>

If an animal becomes stressed in the arena it is unlikely to carry out the tricks as desired by the handler and this can put the handler into a situation where it is evident that they do not have control over the actions of the animal. In many cases, dominance and physical abuse are used by the handler to assert authority over such an animal and to force it into carrying out the desired behaviours before the expectant crowd.



Such dominance has been seen on numerous occasions with circus handlers striking elephants, macaques and bears when they have become stressed and refused to instantly perform the trick they are asked to carry out.<sup>22</sup>

Handlers have been seen dragging bears around the circus arena via ropes attached to bear's noses,<sup>23</sup> striking macaques,<sup>24</sup> and dragging macaques around the circus arena by ropes and chains around their necks.<sup>25</sup> Macaques were also seen baring their teeth in a fear grimace towards the handlers due to stress and fear during performances.<sup>26</sup>

Handlers have been observed kicking, hitting and dragging crocodiles around arenas by a rope tied around their necks, dragging snakes around the arena by their tails and crushing the skulls of green pit vipers before supposedly passing the "live" snake through their nasal passage.<sup>27</sup>

Animals like macaques and bears are often dressed up in human costumes<sup>28</sup> This is both humiliating and stressful, and macaques have been observed biting their costume before, during and after performances.

From mid-2018 onwards some circuses have gradually been replacing wild animals with domesticated species, including cats, pigs, buffaloes, and horses. Domesticated animals might not feel as stressed around humans as wild animals, however, the effect of loud music, lighting and large audiences is also likely to have a negative impact upon their welfare. The cramped conditions in which they are housed are also likely to cause significant stress.

At the Hanoi Central Circus, handlers were observed using a strap tied to a rod to make a loud noise to force horses to run around the arena. This appeared to be causing a significant amount of stress for the horses.

Cats were seen housed in two-storey cages in Hong Loc shows in 2019 and 2020. The cages were so small that the animals could not even turn around.

<sup>16</sup> Fernandez, E. J., Tamborski, M. A., Pickens, S. R., & Timberlake, W. (2009). Animal–visitor interactions in the modern zoo: Conflicts and interventions. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 120(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2009.06.002>

<sup>17</sup> Iossa, G., Soulsbury, C. D., & Harris, S. (2009). Are wild animals suited to a travelling circus life? *Animal Welfare*, 18(2), 129–140.

<sup>18</sup> Stoskopf, M. K. (1983). The physiological effects of psychological stress. *Zoo Biology*, 2(3), 179–190. <https://doi.org/10.1002/zoo.1430020304>

<sup>19</sup> Bowles, A. E., & Thompson, S. J. (1996). A review of non auditory physiological effects of noise on animals. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 100(4), 2708–2708. <https://doi.org/10.1121/1.416100>

<sup>20</sup> Quadros, S., Goulart, V. D. L., Passos, L., Vecci, M. A. M., & Young, R. J. (2014). Zoo visitor effect on mammal behaviour: Does noise matter? *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 156, 78–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2014.04.002>

<sup>21</sup> Mason, G., & Rushen, J. (2008). Stereotypic animal behaviour: Fundamentals and applications to welfare. Cabi.

<sup>22</sup> Hanoi Central Circus, Long Phu Corporation

<sup>23</sup> Orchid Island, Long Phu Corporation

<sup>24</sup> Hong Loc Circus in Buon Ma Thuot Nov 2020

<sup>25</sup> Can Gio Biosphere Reserve, Monkey Island, Long Phu Tourist Company, Nha Trang

<sup>26</sup> Hanoi Central Circus, Dam Sen Tourist Park, Hong Loc Circus, Monkey Island, Long Phu Tourist Company, Nha Trang

<sup>27</sup> Can Gio Biosphere Reserve, Thai Duong Circus, Hong Loc Circus, Buon Ma Thuot, Nov 2020

<sup>28</sup> Hong Loc Circus, Gia Dinh Circus, Long Phu Corporation, My Khanh



## Training

Animals used in circuses require intensive training to perfect the tricks they are forced to perform. Many trainers use some degree of “negative reinforcement”, training the animals by punishing them through physical intervention or withholding of food when they do not comply with commands or perform the tricks required. The use of dominance, fear and in some cases abuse is likely to negatively affect both short and long term welfare.

Elephants are trained using a bull-hook otherwise known as an ‘ankus’ or a ‘guide’. The bull-hook is used to mete out physical punishment, and place the elephant in a state of fear. In the circus arena, it is often shown to an elephant or placed on the elephant’s ears, trunk or head to ‘guide’ the individual in carrying out the desired behaviour, but no matter how gently it may be used in public, at some point it had to be established as a negative reinforcer to be effective. That means causing enough pain and discomfort that the animal remembers, and seeks to avoid that experience by complying with the animal handler’s instructions. The bull-hook removes an elephant’s choice and control over its immediate environment and actions.<sup>29</sup>

Animal handlers in Vietnam reportedly train macaques when they reach two years of age and it can take three years before they are ready to go onto the stage. An individual macaque may then perform for more than 15 years.<sup>30</sup>

To have macaques carry out the unnatural behaviours desired by the circuses, the trainers physically force the animals into unnatural positions. To force a macaque to perform a handstand, the trainer must stretch the monkey out by using his hands and feet to keep the animal’s legs and arms straight. To force a macaque to ride a bicycle they must be chained to the bike to force them to sit on it,<sup>31</sup> and to force macaques to walk on their back legs, trainers pull on chains around their necks to force their head and body into the air and for the animal to stand upright.

*To have macaques carry out the unnatural behaviours desired by the circuses, the trainers physically force the animals into unnatural positions.*

## Transport

For animals in travelling circuses their welfare is further compromised by their frequent travel, and the lack of suitable resting and holding facilities at circus venues.

Animals are held in cages which allow very limited movement, contain no natural features or enrichment and in many cases no access to fresh water. These animals are likely to spend extensive periods of time living in these conditions only being released for training sessions and performances.

They are also likely to suffer further due to the regular travel and the stress that this constant change in their animals’ immediate environment is likely to cause them.

A number of animals are also used to promote the circus to local people, being paraded on a truck with a loudspeaker to attract the attention of the public to visit the circus. This is also likely to cause these animals a significant amount of stress and suffering.

<sup>29</sup> [http://activeenvironments.org/pdf/PC\\_Elephant\\_Welfare.pdf](http://activeenvironments.org/pdf/PC_Elephant_Welfare.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.vah.com.vn/van-hoa-giai-tri/chuyen-nghe-xiec-khi-196179.html>

<sup>31</sup> <http://kienthuc.net.vn/song-4-mau/chuyen-sau-san-khau-cua-nhung-chu-khi-lam-xiec-632644.html>



## Backstage performance environments

Performances in Vietnamese circuses take place two or more times per day depending upon the number of visitors expected. Due to the high frequency of performances, animals are required to live close to the performance arena and be readily accessible for the trainers to bring into the arena for performances and training sessions. Such housing rarely provides them with conditions which meet their specific physical and behavioural needs.

This results in animals often being chained, isolated and housed in small, barren cages. Such conditions were observed at four facilities.<sup>32</sup> In the case of the static circuses and those within the amusement parks these animals are housed in darkened rooms at the back of the performance arenas and out of sight of the visitors.

Animals are also housed in environments which provide no stimulation or comfort. In all cases observed, animals were housed in barren enclosures with no enriching features, and animals were not provided with any bedding materials to provide them with a degree of comfort when resting.<sup>33</sup>

At the Long Phu Corporation a performing elephant is provided with no substrates or bedding materials, does not have access to a constant water source and is shackled to the ground. She can barely take a step forwards or backwards, and cannot exhibit most of her typical behaviours.

This physical restriction can have adverse effects on health. Elephants lacking physical exercise in circuses can become obese, which in turn leads to defects of the joints and ligaments of feet and legs.<sup>34</sup>



Circus elephants are known to suffer from rheumatoid disorders, and chronic arthritis.<sup>35</sup> The development of lameness is also common.<sup>36,37</sup> Such joint problems as well as hernias are thought to result from circus elephants repeatedly assuming unnatural positions during performances.<sup>38</sup>

In addition to restricting physical movements this also restricts social interactions. No other elephants are at this facility presenting the lone elephant with serious welfare issues.

Macaques are also often housed in isolation.<sup>39</sup> Macaques are either housed in small cages, or chained to metal grids fixed to the wall. None of the animals observed were provided with any bedding material, and none had access to a constant water source.

Housing social species in solitary confinement causes significant welfare problems. Limited opportunities for undertaking appropriate social behaviours will compromise welfare and may result in stress, abnormal behaviours and aggression.<sup>40</sup> The lack of social

interaction represents a severe stressor for individuals who are highly social by nature, and the resulting stress can have short-term as well as chronic (long-term) behavioural and physiological effects. Through time this can induce poor welfare by compromising health, altering brain function, and lowering life expectancy.<sup>41</sup> Normal behaviour gives way to a higher percentage of inactivity and/or increased abnormal behaviour, ie, self-injury, and stereotyping.<sup>42</sup>

Asiatic black bears are housed in small cages, provided with no substrates or bedding materials and have no visible access to a water source. Bears at the Long Phu Corporation were observed rocking and banging their heads against the cage bars. As stereotypy normally indicate sub-optimal environments, a higher degree of stereotyping in circuses may be considered indicative of poorer welfare.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Hanoi Central Circus, Dam Sen Tourist Park, Hong Loc Circus, Long Phu Corporation

<sup>33</sup> Macaques and Bears at Hanoi Central Circus, Hong Loc Circus, Long Phu Corporation

<sup>34</sup> Kurt, F., & Hartl, G. B. (1995). Asian elephants (*Elephas maximus*) in captivity—A challenge for zoo biological research. *Research and Captive Propagation*, 310–326.

<sup>35</sup> Clark, H. W., Laughlin, D. C., Bailey, J. S., & Brown, T. M. (1980). *Mycoplasma* species and arthritis in captive elephants. *The Journal of Zoo Animal Medicine*, 11(1), 3–15.

<sup>36</sup> Lindau, K. H. (1970). Lameness in circus elephants—a result of training. *Verhandlungsberichte Des 12. Internationalen Symposiums Über Die Erkrankungen Der Zootiere*, 129–131.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, M. A., Hogan, J. N., & Meehan, C. L. (2016). Housing and demographic risk factors impacting foot and musculoskeletal health in African elephants [*Loxodonta africana*] and Asian elephants [*Elephas maximus*] in North American zoos. *PLoS One*, 11(7), e0155223.

<sup>38</sup> Kuntze, A. (1989). Work-related illnesses: Hernia perinealis, Bursitis praepatellaris and Tyloma olecrani in female circus elephants (*Elephas maximus*). *Verh. Ber. Erkr. Zootiere*, 31, 185–187.

<sup>39</sup> Central Circus, Dam Sen Tourist Park, Hong Loc, Monkey Island (Long Phu Corporation)

<sup>40</sup> Dorning, J., Stephen Harris, S., & Pickett, H. (2016). The welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses, a specialists' report prepared for the Welsh Government.

<sup>41</sup> Harris, S. (2007). A review of the welfare of wild animals in circuses. *Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals*.

<sup>42</sup> Mason, G. J. (1991). Stereotypies and suffering. *Behavioural Processes*, 25(2), 103–115. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0376-6357\(91\)90013-P](https://doi.org/10.1016/0376-6357(91)90013-P)

<sup>43</sup> Iossa, G., Soulsbury, C. D., & Harris, S. (2009). Are wild animals suited to a travelling circus life? *Animal Welfare*, 18(2), 129–140.

Stereotypy also tends to increase in frequency with increasing restraint of movement and with more barren environments. For instance, circus elephants kept shackled weave and head-nod more than those kept in paddocks;<sup>44,45</sup> zoo bears pace more in the smaller, off-exhibit enclosures than in the larger, on-exhibit enclosures;<sup>46,47</sup> and captive parrots perform more oral and locomotory stereotypies in barren cages than in enriched cages.<sup>48</sup>

### Circus elephants kept shackled weave and head-nod more than those kept in paddocks



Social isolation and reduced space allowance has also been demonstrated to cause increased levels of aggression and stress levels in a range of captive wild animals, including primates.<sup>49,50</sup>

In psittacine birds,<sup>51</sup> poor socialisation, anxiety, boredom, hand-rearing and related human imprinting, with consequent failure to learn correct preening behaviours, may cause stress and, as a result, feather plucking.<sup>52,53</sup>

Domesticated animals including cats and dogs were also found being kept in tiny cages without constant access to water.

### Early removal from mothers and family groups

At one facility, an infant macaque had been removed from their mother and chained in an isolated environment.<sup>54</sup> The handlers offered this individual to the investigator to have their photograph taken with, and it is assumed that this is a further revenue source for the circus operators.

Removing infants such as this macaque from their mothers is likely to cause both immediate and long term welfare problems. Genetic factors and early life adversity both play a major role in the aetiology of mood and anxiety disorders.<sup>55</sup>

Exposure to chronic mild stress is known to induce anhedonia (the inability to feel pleasure in normally pleasurable activities) in adult animals and is associated with depression in humans.<sup>56</sup> Studies conducted on primates have demonstrated that maternal deprivation and social isolation can result in stereotypies like self-suckling, neophobia, persistent abnormal or stereotypical behaviours, anaclitic depression and withdrawal, and negatively affect plasma-cortisol levels, cell-mediated immunity, and survivorship.<sup>57,58,59,60,61,62,63,64</sup>

44 Schmid, J. (1995). Keeping circus elephants temporarily in paddocks—the effects on their behaviour. *Animal Welfare*, 4(2), 87–101.

45 Friend, T. H., & Parker, M. L. (1999). The effect of penning versus picketing on stereotypic behavior of circus elephants. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 64(3), 213–225.

46 Mallapur, A., & Chellam, R. (2002). Environmental influences on stereotypy and the activity budget of Indian leopards (*Panthera pardus*) in four zoos in Southern India. *Zoo Biology: Published in Affiliation with the American Zoo and Aquarium Association*, 21(6), 585–595.

47 Montaudouin, S., & Le Pape, G. (2005). Comparison between 28 zoological parks: Stereotypic and social behaviours of captive brown bears (*Ursus arctos*). *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 92(1–2), 129–141.

48 Meehan, C. L., Garner, J. P., & Mench, J. A. (2004). Environmental enrichment and development of cage stereotypy in Orange-winged Amazon parrots (*Amazona amazonica*). *Developmental Psychobiology*, 44(4), 209–218.

49 Morgan, K. N., & Trombop, C. T. (2007). Sources of stress in captivity. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 102(3), 262–302.

50 Honess, P. E., & Marin, C. M. (2006). Behavioural and physiological aspects of stress and aggression in nonhuman primates. *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*, 30(3), 390–412. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neubiorev.2005.04.003>

51 Parrots, macaws, parakeets, cockatiels

52 Chitty, J. (2003). Feather plucking in psittacine birds 1. Presentation and medical investigation. *In Practice*, 25(8), 484–493.

53 Chitty, J. (2003). Feather plucking in psittacine birds 2. Social, environmental and behavioural considerations. *In Practice*, 25(9), 550–555.

54 Long Phu Corporation

55 Heim, C., & Nemeroff, C. B. (2001). The role of childhood trauma in the neurobiology of mood and anxiety disorders: Preclinical and clinical studies. *Biological Psychiatry*, 49(12), 1023–1039.

56 Zalosnik, M. I., Pollano, A., Trujillo, V., Suarez, M. M., & Durando, P. E. (2014). Effect of maternal separation and chronic stress on hippocampal-dependent memory in young adult rats: Evidence for the match-mismatch hypothesis. *Stress*, 17(5), 445–450.

57 Dorning, J., Stephen Harris, S., & Pickett, H. (2016). The welfare of wild animals in travelling circuses, a specialists' report prepared for the Welsh Government.

58 Harlow, H. (1962). Social deprivation in monkeys. *Scientific American*, 207, 136.

59 Kaufman, I., & Rosenblum, L. (1967). The reaction to separation in infant monkeys: Anaclitic depression and conservation-withdrawal. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 29(6), 648–675.

60 Lewis, M. H., Gluck, J. P., Petitto, J. M., Hensley, L. L., & Ozer, H. (2000). Early social deprivation in nonhuman primates: Long-term effects on survival and cell-mediated immunity. *Biological Psychiatry*, 47(2), 119–126.

61 Norcross, J. L., & Newman, J. D. (1999). Effects of separation and novelty on distress vocalizations and cortisol in the common marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*). *American Journal of Primatology*, 47(3), 209–222.

62 Roy, M. A. (1981). Abnormal behaviors in nursery-reared squirrel monkeys (*Saimiri sciureus*). *American Journal of Primatology*, 1(1), 35–42.

63 Shannon, C., Champoux, M., & Suomi, S. J. (1998). Rearing condition and plasma cortisol in rhesus monkey infants. *American Journal of Primatology*, 46(4), 311–321.

64 Yamamoto, M. E., & de Araújo Lopes, F. (2004). Effect of removal from the family group on feeding behavior by captive *Callithrix jacchus*. *International Journal of Primatology*, 25(2), 489–500.



## Stress

Many animals in Vietnamese circuses display abnormal behaviours which are believed to result from stress. Bears at the Long Phu Corporation were observed pacing, rubbing their heads against the cage bars and self-mutilating, and macaques were seen head twisting and swaying from side to side within their restrictive enclosures.

Stress is a symptom expressed by an animal, resulting from exposure of the individual to a hostile environment.

Stress can result in abnormal and/or repetitive behaviours that may be detrimental to both physical and psychological health. Stereotypic behaviour may be the result of frustrated needs or be a coping mechanism developed to address a current or previous inadequate or stressful environment. The presence of stereotypic behaviour is generally acknowledged to be an indicator of current or previous poor welfare.<sup>65</sup>

## Poor diets

Due to a lack of species-specific knowledge it is likely that many circus animals in Vietnam are being fed a poor-quality diet. Investigations at the Hanoi Central Circus identified that the macaques are fed concentrated milk, boiled eggs, sugar and fruits.<sup>66</sup> The natural diet of the rhesus macaque varies by region, but they are generally omnivorous opportunists, feeding mainly on roots, fruits, seeds, bark, herbs, insects, crop plants and small animals.<sup>67,68</sup> The poor quality diet is likely to have an adverse impact on their physical health and thus have a negative impact on their welfare.

***Stress can result in abnormal and/or repetitive behaviours that may be detrimental to both physical and psychological health.***

## Death

There is no public record of the death of animals used in circus performances in Vietnam. Media records report the death of two circus elephants and three macaques (appendix seven).

CITES import data documents the import of 38 bottlenose dolphins into Vietnam between 2008 and 2019 (appendix three). Four facilities currently exhibit dolphins for circus shows. Assuming that each facility has between 2-3 individual animals, between 26 to 30 individuals are no longer in Vietnam and it is reasonable to assume that many of them have died. This assumption is supported through personal communication with staff members at the Bao Son Paradise Park where we are aware of the deaths of five dolphins.

Globally, capture, transport and confinement have considerable impact on cetacean mortality. A 1995<sup>69</sup> study determined that mortality rates for bottlenose dolphins increase six-fold during and immediately after capture. A similar mortality spike is seen after every transport between facilities. Wild-caught dolphins experience prolonged periods of stress during capture, holding and transportation and these factors have likely contributed to the death of bottlenose dolphins imported into Vietnam for use in circus shows.

<sup>65</sup> Mason, G. (2006). Stereotypic behaviour in captive animals: Fundamentals and implications for welfare and beyond. *Stereotypic Animal Behaviour: Fundamentals and Applications to Welfare*, 325–356.

<sup>66</sup> <http://kienthuc.net.vn/song-4-mau/chuyen-sau-san-khau-cua-nhung-chu-khi-lam-xiec-632644.html>

<sup>67</sup> Goldstein, S. J., & Richard, A. F. (1989). Ecology of rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*) in northwest Pakistan. *International Journal of Primatology*, 10(6), 531–567. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02739364>

<sup>68</sup> Cui, Z., Shao, Q., Grueter, C. C., Wang, Z., Lu, J., & Raubenheimer, D. (2019). Dietary diversity of an ecological and macronutritional generalist primate in a harsh high-latitude habitat, the Taihangshan macaque (*Macaca mulatta tcheliensis*). *American Journal of Primatology*, 81(4), e22965. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajp.22965>

<sup>69</sup> Small, R.J. and DeMaster, D.P. 1995. Acclimation to captivity: A quantitative estimate based on survival of bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions. *Marine Mammal Science* 11: 510-519.

# HUMAN SAFETY



Wild animals such as elephants, bears, snakes, crocodiles and macaques are unpredictable and inherently dangerous, particularly to circus staff<sup>70</sup> who work with them, and to the public who meet them through rides and photo opportunities<sup>71</sup> and from being near wild animals held in stressful situations.



There are several documented instances of injury caused by wild animals in Vietnam. These have resulted in death and serious injury for circus trainers and children.

In March 2017, a crocodile bit a circus trainer on the face during a performance in Thanh Liem District's Liem Can Commune.<sup>72</sup> The injury required hospital treatment due to its severity.

Captive elephants pose a high public safety risk. Between 2010 and 2014, three children were killed by circus elephants (appendix eight).

These instances are the result of members of the public being encouraged to interact with or having unregulated and unsupervised access to dangerous wild animals.

Members of the public are encouraged to interact with the "circus" animals at the Long Phu Corporation, and unsupervised access situations were observed during visits to Long Phu Corporation animal holding areas, where unrestricted access was available to the areas holding the elephants, bears and macaques.

Circuses do not employ effective barriers between the animals and the public and therefore animals such as elephants, macaques, snakes and bears could escape the circus arena and enter the crowd. Such incidents have been seen in circuses internationally and often result in the serious injury or death of members of the public.<sup>73,74,75</sup>

Zoonotic disease transmission is also a risk of close contact between animals and people. The public are encouraged to handle animals at several facilities.<sup>76</sup> This practice can endanger the health of both animals and the public by exposing both to potential disease transmission.

Many primates carry diseases that are easily transmittable or present a serious risk to humans. When there is close contact between people and macaques, *Cercopithecine herpesvirus 1* (B virus), or Herpes B, poses a serious threat to human life.<sup>77</sup> The virus is carried by a high percentage of individuals across the Asian macaque species. For example, it is thought to be present in 90% of rhesus and long-tailed macaques.<sup>78</sup>

70 <https://vietnamnet.vn/vn/giai-tri/di-san-my-thuat-san-khau/doi-dien-vien-xiec-bao-nguoi-tung-bi-tran-can-gau-tat-khi-cao-641461.html>

71 Hoa Lan Stream Tourist Area

72 <http://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/crocodile-mauls-circus-performer-s-face-in-northern-vietnam-3554118.html>

73 [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/01/c\\_133759360.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/01/c_133759360.htm)

74 <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/world-news/death-elephant-france-pensioner-playing-2262212#ixzz2eRCgYuKP>

75 <http://www.whatsonningbo.com/news-3562-circus-tiger-bites-a-man-his-7yo-daughter-during-performance-in-jiangxi.html>

76 Baarza Tuan Chau Eco-Park, Vinpearl Land, Long Phu Corporation, Quy Nhon Zoo, Tuan Chau Ha Long Amusement Park

77 Huff, J. L., & Barry, P. A. (2003). B-virus (Cercopithecine herpesvirus 1) infection in humans and macaques: Potential for zoonotic disease. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, 9(2), 246.

78 Devaux, C. A., Mediannikov, O., Medkour, H., & Raoult, D. (2019). Infectious Disease Risk Across the Growing Human-Non Human Primate Interface: A Review of the Evidence. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2019.00305>



Transmission to humans is not common, but the consequences of infection are dire enough that the UK's Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens has classified the virus as Group 4: "Causes severe human disease and is a serious hazard to employees; it is likely to spread to the community and there is usually no effective prophylaxis or treatment available."<sup>79</sup> Less than thirty per cent of infected humans survive in the absence of appropriate antiviral therapy.<sup>80</sup>

The virus can be contracted via bites or scratches, or by contact with an infected animal's mouth, nose or eyes.<sup>81</sup> Testing for the virus is not always reliable<sup>82</sup> and most macaques carrying the virus appear to be asymptomatic.<sup>83</sup>

A 2015 study of captive primates in Chinese zoos identified significantly high incidences of *Enterocytozoon bieneusi*.<sup>84</sup> This infects the enterocytes of the small intestine and causes diarrhoea and enteric diseases in humans and domestic and wild animals.<sup>85,86,87</sup> *E. bieneusi* can be transmitted from humans to non-human primates and vice versa and therefore the authors recommend that human contact with non-human primates should be reduced to minimise the risks of infection.<sup>88</sup>

**Less than 30% of infected humans survive in the absence of appropriate antiviral therapy.**

<sup>79</sup> Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens. (1998). Working safely with simians: Management of infection risks. Health and Safety Executive. <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/misc134.pdf>

<sup>80</sup> Huff, J.L., & Barry, P.A. (2003)

<sup>81</sup> CDC. (2021). Herpes B Virus. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/herpesvirus/index.html>

<sup>82</sup> Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens. (1998)

<sup>83</sup> Huff, J.L., & Barry, P.A. (2003)

<sup>84</sup> Karim, M. R., Dong, H., Li, T., Yu, F., Li, D., Zhang, L., Li, J., Wang, R., Li, S., & Li, X. (2015). Predominance and new genotypes of *Enterocytozoon bieneusi* in captive nonhuman primates in zoos in China: High genetic diversity and zoonotic significance. *PLoS One*, 10(2), e0117991.

<sup>85</sup> Santín, M., & Fayer, R. (2011). Microsporidiosis: *Enterocytozoon bieneusi* in domesticated and wild animals. *Research in Veterinary Science*, 90(3), 363–371.

<sup>86</sup> Matos, O., Lobo, M. L., & Xiao, L. (2012). Epidemiology of *Enterocytozoon bieneusi* infection in humans. *Journal of Parasitology Research*, 2012.

<sup>87</sup> Karim, M. R., Wang, R., Dong, H., Zhang, L., Li, J., Zhang, S., Rume, F. I., Qi, M., Jian, F., & Sun, M. (2014). Genetic polymorphism and zoonotic potential of *Enterocytozoon bieneusi* from nonhuman primates in China. *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*, 80(6), 1893–1898.

<sup>88</sup> <http://web.stanford.edu/group/parasites/ParaSites2006/Microsporidiosis/microsporidia1.html>



People who have close contact with monkeys are also increasingly susceptible to *Plasmodium knowlesi*, a form of malaria common in monkeys in South East Asia. Over the past decade human cases of *knowlesi* malaria have been on the rise. Monkey malaria has become the most common form of malaria now detected in hospitals and clinics in Malaysian Borneo, and there is growing concern that this simian parasite is adapting to infect humans more efficiently.

As people and macaques have come into closer and more constant contact, so more people are being bitten by mosquitoes laden with *knowlesi* parasites. The fear is that the parasite will increasingly adapt to the point where there is sustained transmission from human to human. If that does happen, monkey malaria could become the next emerging infectious disease threat.<sup>89,90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> <https://www.wbez.org/shows/all-things-considered/monkey-malaria-creeps-closer-to-being-a-major-human-threat/56b4e491-3e86-426c-b532-5562fc1a270a>

Close contact with reptiles also poses significant health risks. Reptiles frequently carry *Salmonella*, *Mycobacterium*, *Campylobacter*, and *Escherichia coli* that can cause serious illness. Infections can result from handling reptiles and having contact with their environments, including the water from the containers in which they live. Young children are particularly at risk from infection because their immune systems are still developing and because they are more likely than others to put their fingers or other items into their mouths.<sup>91</sup>

Despite this risk, pythons are routinely draped around the necks of children and adults during performances at Long Phu Corporation, and visitors are encouraged to handle snakes at VinPearl Land, Phu Quoc.

<sup>90</sup> Dankwa, S., Lim, C., Bei, A. K., Jiang, R. H. Y., Abshire, J. R., Patel, S. D., Goldberg, J. M., Moreno, Y., Kono, M., Niles, J. C., & Duraisingh, M. T. (2016). Ancient human sialic acid variant restricts an emerging zoonotic malaria parasite. *Nature Communications*, 7(1), 11187. <https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms11187>

## Circus closures

Despite a number of facilities still using circus animals in performances, the animal circus industry in Vietnam is in decline. Since 2017 a number of circuses have been transitioning away from using wild animals, in response to the public's opposition.<sup>92</sup>

Sixteen circus shows have stopped using all animals (table 1) and seven circus shows ended the use of some species (table 2) in recent years.

<sup>91</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/SalmonellaFrogTurtle/>

<sup>92</sup> Circus wild animals retire, pets get job | Videos | Vietnam+ (VietnamPlus)

Facility	Action taken	Date
Au Co Circus	Closed down	2020
Ba Na Hills Resort	Stopped animal circus shows	2016
Binh Minh Circus	Closed down	No date
Can Gio Biosphere Reserve	Stopped animal circus shows	2018
Dai Duong Circus Arts Troupe	Closed down	No date
Dai Nam Zoo	Stopped animal circus shows	2016
Dong A Arts & Performance Co Ltd	Closed down	2016
Hanoi Zoo	Stopped animal circus shows	2016
Hai Duong Circus Troupe	Closed down	No date
Hoa Phuong Co Ltd	Closed down	No date
Hoang Nam Circus	Closed down	2016
Mango Gardens Farm	Stopped animal circus shows	2020
Saigon Zoo	Stopped animal circus shows	2018
Sao Mai Circus	Closed down	2016
Sao Minh Circus	Closed down	2017
Suoi Tien Amusement Park	Stopped animal circus shows	2018



**Table 1:** Facilities that have stopped using all animals in circus shows



Facility	Action taken	Date
Bao Son Paradise Park	Stopped dolphin shows	2016
Dam Sen Tourist Park	Stopped the use of macaques, elephants, bears and orangutans in circus shows	Macaques 2020 Orangutans 2019 Elephants & bears 2018
Hanoi Central Circus	Stopped the use of macaques, elephants, bears and ostrich in static circus shows	2020
Gia Dinh Circus	Stopped using bears in circus shows	2017
Long An Circus	Stopped use of wild animals in circus shows	2018
Vietnam Circus & Vaudeville Secondary School	Stopped the use of bears in circus shows	2019
Vin Pearl, Nha Trang	Stopped the use of macaques in circus shows	2017



**Table 2:** Facilities that have stopped using some animal species in circus shows

In addition to these closures, and facilities stopping the use of wild animal species in circus shows, there have also been a number of additional significant events in recent years which demonstrate the further decline of the use of animals in circus shows in Vietnam.

1. Hanoi Central Circus voluntarily transferred their last 4 bears to Animals Asia's Tam Dao bear rescue centre in June 2021
2. A reduction in the use of animals in the Hanoi International Circus Festival in 2021.
3. The Ministry of Culture instructed the Vietnam Circus & Vaudeville Secondary School in Hanoi to transfer a bear to our sanctuary in November 2019<sup>93</sup>. Subsequently 4 macaques were also transferred to the Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre.
4. Vietnam Circus Federation publicly committed to phase out its use of wild animals in circus shows in August 2019,<sup>94</sup>
5. The confiscation of two bear cubs from the Hanoi circus to be placed in the Tam Dao bear rescue centre in April 2019,<sup>95</sup>
6. Government decision not to allow the development of the Danang Dolphinarium in September 2016.

<sup>93</sup> Ministry of Culture, Sports & Tourism official correspondence No: 166/TCXTKVN-HCTH

<sup>94</sup> <https://en.vietnamplus.vn/circus-wild-animals-retire-pets-get-job/157530.vnp>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.animalsasia.org/uk/media/news/news-archive/two-endangered-moon-bear-cubs-safe-in-sanctuary-after-rescue-from-vietnamese-circus.html>

# CONCLUSION



The use of wild animals in performances, whether in static circuses, tourist resorts, amusement parks, or travelling circuses, poses a threat to species conservation, and a significant risk to the welfare of the individual animals and the safety of people.

Information from within the circus industry implies that moon bears have been captured from the wild to supply the circuses, further threatening this endangered species, which is already in decline due to habitat loss and poaching.<sup>96</sup> The use of bears, gibbons, crocodiles and elephants in circuses also amount to the commercial exploitation of a protected species in violation of Vietnamese law.

Facilities using circus animals further violate Vietnamese laws by transporting animals between provinces without carrying out the necessary health checks and quarantines. In doing so they also increase the risk of zoonotic diseases being moved freely around the country.

The welfare of captive wild animals used in Vietnamese circuses is severely compromised by their training, performances, poor living conditions, and in several cases their capture from the wild. Wild animals are subjected to stressful training regimes, forced to perform in front of large and often noisy crowds, and subjected to regular and stressful handling. Such individuals spend much of their lives living within restrictive, unnatural environments, often separated from other individuals and provided with little or no environmental stimulation.

Neither natural environments nor many highly motivated natural behaviours can be recreated in circuses, and only limited enrichment can be provided. The high level of abnormal behaviour observed testifies to the absence of useful environmental stimulation.<sup>97</sup> For animals in travelling circuses they are also forced to endure long periods of time in transit and regularly exposed to unfamiliar and potentially stressful environments.

The import of wild caught dolphins from Japanese drive hunting has also received significant international condemnation due to methods used to capture dolphins causing significant stress.

All of these factors are likely to be having a negative impact on the welfare of captive wild animals used in circuses in Vietnam, leading to many experiencing negative affective states. Experience has demonstrated that this impact can last for a lifetime even when individuals have been fortunate enough to be removed and placed into a more appropriate environment.

<sup>96</sup> <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22824/0>

<sup>97</sup> Animals in Travelling Circus; the Science of Suffering, Animal Defenders International 2008 [http://federalcircusbill.org/briefings/SCS\\_US\\_rep\\_FINAL\\_Jun%2015%2008\\_LOW%20RES.pdf](http://federalcircusbill.org/briefings/SCS_US_rep_FINAL_Jun%2015%2008_LOW%20RES.pdf)

*Behavioural research is demonstrating that the lives of animals are much more complex than we previously understood.*



The use of certain wild animals in circuses is also inherently dangerous, particularly to circus staff and to children who meet them through rides, photo opportunities and being in the vicinity of travelling circuses. The risks that many animals used in circus performances pose to public health and safety through direct attack, escape or temporary loss of handler control increases considerably because of poor animal welfare conditions, inadequate safety measures, and excessive handling.<sup>98</sup>

Three children in Vietnam have been killed by circus elephants in recent years and circuses using dangerous wild animals such as elephants, crocodiles and bears pose a significant risk of further incidents occurring. The combination of the temporary nature of accommodation during travel (or at temporary sites in the case of travelling circuses), the proximity of animals to people during performances and the practice of 'parading' animals through towns where circuses are performing,<sup>99</sup> represents a serious risk of accident or escape.

Some animals such as macaques and pythons not only pose the threat of physical injury, but the significant potential for disease transmission between animals and people.

Promoting the use of wild animals in circus shows and for animal interaction opportunities conveys a public message of animal use purely for entertainment and does nothing to promote respect and empathy. The appalling treatment of animals by Vietnamese animal handlers during performances demonstrates gross negligence, and a lack of compassion for animals as sentient individuals. Visitors are neither educated on the nature or behaviour of the wild animals they see, nor the need to protect and care for them and their wild counterparts.

In a number of cases the continued use of animals in circuses is in breach of the WAZA and VZA policies on the use of animals in shows, yet the facilities continue to use animals for entertainment and no consequences of such disregard for association policy have been publicly presented to them.

Behavioural research is demonstrating that the lives of animals are much more complex than we previously understood, animal social groupings, communication, feelings of pain, fear and anxiety, and the positive feelings of pleasure and play are vitally important to them. They can also be reduced to a state resembling human depression by chronic stress or confinement in a cage. This greater understanding of animal sentience has implications for the way we treat animals and the policies and laws we adopt.

<sup>98</sup> Public Safety and the Ineffectiveness of Circus Recapture Plans, Zoocheck Canada 2003

<sup>99</sup> Personal observations



The physical and psychological suffering of wild animals in circuses has been recognised in many countries where either all animals, all wild-caught animals, or some or all species of non-domesticated animals, are prohibited from being used in circuses.<sup>100</sup>

The decline in the number of circuses using wild animals is a very encouraging sign of change within Vietnam, demonstrating that the public no longer find it acceptable to use animals such as bears, elephants, orangutans and macaques in circus shows.

Captive wild animal facilities in Vietnam are ideally placed to promote messages of conservation and environmental protection to the public. Yet these messages are being undermined by the continued promotion of animals as entertainers by those involved within the circus industry, thus making the work of Vietnamese zoos and safari parks to educate the public about the natural behaviours of wild animals and the need for us to conserve them and their habitats more difficult.

A national law banning the use of wild animals in animal performances which force animals to carry out unnatural behaviours in Vietnam, is necessary. This will demonstrate a national commitment to supporting captive wild animal facilities that aim to protect animals from extinction, protect the natural environment, protect animals from suffering, and protect people from harm.

<sup>100</sup> Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, and Greece have banned the use of all animals in circuses. Austria, Columbia, Costa Rica, Croatia, El Salvador, Israel, Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Singapore, and Slovenia have complete prohibitions on the use of wild animals in circuses. Legislation is also progressing within Belgium. Local bans on the use of animals in circuses in certain cities, districts and states exist in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Ireland, Spain, and the USA. India, Cyprus and Slovenia have bans on use of cetaceans in captivity and subsequently in performances.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix one

Captive wild animal facilities using wild and domestic animals in circuses in Vietnam

	Facility	Animals	Facility Type
1	Baarza Tuan Chau Eco-Park	Dolphins, seals, sea lions <sup>101</sup>	Amusement Park
2	Bao Son Paradise Park	Dogs, sea lions	Amusement Park
3	Dam Sen Tourist Park	Dogs, snakes	Amusement Park
4	Dong Duong Circus	Macaques, snakes	Travelling Circus
5	Gia Dinh Circus	Dogs, macaques, snakes	Circus
6	Hanoi Central Circus	Birds, goats, horses, macaques, pigs, snakes	Circus + Travelling Circus
7	Ho May Park	Dogs, macaques	Amusement Park
8	Hong Loc Circus	Bears, crocodile, dogs, doves, goats, macaques, snakes	Travelling Circus
9	Long Phu Corporation	Bears, dogs, elephants, macaques, snakes	Tourist Resort
10	My Khanh	Dogs, macaques, pigs	Tourist Resort
11	Quy Nhon Zoo	Birds	Amusement Park
12	Thai Duong Circus	Macaques, snakes	Travelling Circus
13	Thang Long Circus	Macaques, snakes	Travelling Circus
14	Tuan Chau Ha Long Amusement Park	Dolphins, sea lions	Amusement Park
15	Vietnam Circus & Vaudeville Secondary School	Macaques	Circus
16	VinPearl Safari Park (Nha Trang)	Dolphins, sea lions, birds	Amusement Park
17	VinPearl Safari Park (Phu Quoc)	Birds, dolphins, macaques, gibbons, civets, snakes	Amusement Park

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.bestpricetravel.com/travel-guide/dolphin-show-in-tuan-chau-526.html>

## Appendix two

### DECREE No. 06/2019/ND-CP

#### On Management of Endangered, Precious and Rare Forest Plants and Animals and Implementation of The Convention on International Trade In Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

##### Article 4. List of endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals

1. List of endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals promulgated with this Decree includes:

**a) Group I:** Forest plants and animals in danger of extinction which are strictly prohibited from exploitation and use for commercial purposes, and species of Appendix I to CITES that are naturally distributed in Vietnam. Group IA consists of forest plants. Group IB consists of forest animals.

**b) Group II:** Forest animals and plants not in danger of extinction but at the risk of extinction without rigid management and restriction from exploitation or use for commercial purposes, and species listed in Appendix II to CITES that are naturally distributed in Vietnam.

Group IIA consists of forest plants. Group IIB consists of forest animals.

2. Amending, supplementing the list of endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals.

Every five years, or in the case of changes in the species promulgated in Clause 1 of this Article or the list of species under Appendix I and II to CITES, or changes related to forest plants and forest animals that are naturally distributed in Vietnam, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development shall submit to the Government amendments and supplements of the list of endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals.

##### Article 5. Protection of endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals

1. Hunting, trapping, catching, exploiting, raising, caging, killing, possessing, processing, transporting, and trading endangered, precious, and rare forest animals and plants shall not have an adverse effect on the conservation of such species in nature.
2. All activities of hunting, trapping, catching, exploiting, raising, caging, killing, possessing, processing, transporting, trading, advertising, exhibiting, export, import, temporary import for re-exporting, and temporary export for re-importing shall be controlled, ensuring the lawful origin of specimens.
3. The regular habitat areas of endangered, precious, and rare forest animals and plants are researched as a basis for the establishment of special-use forests.
4. Organizations, households, and individuals that carry out activities of production, construction of works, survey, exploration, research, sight-seeing, tourism, and other activities in forests that hold endangered, precious, and rare forest plants and animals shall abide by the provisions of this Decree and other relevant laws.

##### Article 12. Exploitation of specimens of endangered forest fauna and flora

1. Exploit specimens listed in Appendix I to CITES from the wild in the following cases:
  - a) For scientific research or projects;
  - b) For initial stocks for breeding or artificially propagated operation;
  - c) For foreign affairs purposes according to the Prime Minister's decision;
2. Exploit specimens listed in Appendix II to CITES from the wild in the following cases:
  - a) For scientific research or projects;

b) For initial stocks for breeding or artificially propagated operation;

c) For foreign affairs purposes according to the Prime Minister's decision;

d) For sustainable commercial purposes in accordance with the law.

3. Responsibilities of organizations and individuals that exploit specimens of endangered forest fauna and flora

a) Having an exploitation plan according to Template No.1 and Template No.2 in the Appendix to this Decree;

b) Notifying management authorities on forestry and fisheries for supervision prior to the implementation of exploiting activities;

c) Ensuring that the exploitation will not have any side-effects on the conservation and sustainable development of the wildlife population;

d) Exploiting specimens in accordance with the laws of Vietnam and CITES on exploiting specimens of endangered fauna and flora.

##### Article 30. Transport, store specimens of wild animal and plant species listed in Appendices to CITES

- 1) Transportation of specimens shall meet the following requirements:

a) Obtaining legal documents in accordance with regulations regarding forestry and fisheries management;

b) Obtaining Quarantine Certificate(s) for animals, animals' products when transporting specimens out of the province according to legislation on veterinary medicine and plant protection;

c) Ensure safety for living specimens and people involved in the transporting process and at receiving establishments.

2. Store specimens of endangered animals and plants listed in Appendices to CITES that are of legal origin.

## Appendix three

Import of cetaceans into Vietnam from CITES trade database (May 2021)

Year	Appendix	Taxon	Exporter	Number	Source
2008	II	Tursiops aduncus	ID	4	C
2008	II	Tursiops truncatus	CN	2	F
2011	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	5	W
2013	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	10	W
2015	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	2	W
2015	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	5	W
2016	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	1	W
2016	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	3	W
2017	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	4	W
2019	II	Tursiops truncatus	JP	3	W

## Appendix four

### Law on Animal Health 32/2018/QH14

**Article 51.** Requirements on terrestrial animals participating in trade fairs, exhibitions, sport competitions or art performances; terrestrial animal products participating in trade fairs or exhibitions

1. Terrestrial animals participating in trade fairs, exhibitions, sport competitions or art performances; terrestrial animal products participating in trade fairs or exhibitions must:
  - a) Be of clear origin and carry no pathogen;
  - b) Having been quarantined at places of departure and destination under regulations.

2. While participating in trade fairs, exhibitions, sport competitions or art performances, animal and animal product owners shall comply with regulations on veterinary sanitation requirements under supervision by a local animal health management agency.
3. At the end of trade fairs, exhibitions, sport competitions or art performances, local animal health management agencies shall guide sanitization, disinfection and decontamination in areas where animals and animal products are gathered in large numbers; inspect and grant quarantine certificates for animals and animal products satisfying veterinary sanitation requirements for transportation and use in the country.

In case they need to export animals and animal products out of Vietnam, owners shall carry out procedures under regulations on export quarantine.

## Appendix five

### Circular 25/2016/TT-BNNPTNT Regulation on quarantine of terrestrial animals and terrestrial animal products

Article 4. Quarantine of animals transported out of provincial-level localities

1. Before transporting animal(s) out of a provincial-level localities, the commodity owner must send one set of quarantine registration dossiers in accordance with Form 1 in Appendix-V of this Circular to the provincial sub-department in charge of veterinary management or the veterinary station authorized by the provincial sub-department (hereinafter referred to as the local animal quarantine organization).
2. As stipulated in Clause 1 of Article 37 of the Veterinary Law, the local animal quarantine organization shall implement quarantine as follows:
  - a) Examine clinical conditions;
  - b) Take samples for examination for diseases in accordance with the provisions of Appendix-XI of this Circular;
  - c) Inspect sealing and loading means into containers or means of transport for animals;
  - d) Guide and monitor commodity owners to disinfect animal containers or means of transport for animals;
  - dd) Issue quarantine certificates

- e) Notify the local animal quarantine organization of the intended destination, by e-mail or fax, of the following information, including: quarantine certificate number, date of issuance, quantity of the commodities, purpose of use, destination, and number plates of means of transportation. Notify the commodity owner immediately after the issuance of health certificate for animals being transported to be used for breeding, collecting notices by week for animals transported for slaughter;
- g) In cases where animals do not meet veterinary sanitary requirements, the local animal quarantine organization shall not issue a quarantine certificate and will conduct treatment in accordance with regulations.
3. Quarantine for animals which have departed from establishments that have been recognized as disease-free, have been monitored to have no pathogens, or which have prevented diseases by vaccination and are still under immune protection, shall be listed and managed by the local animal quarantine organization as stipulated in Appendix-XI of this Circular.

The local animal quarantine organization shall implement the following:

- a) Inspect sealing and loading means into containers or means of transport for animals;
- b) Guide and monitor commodity owners to disinfect animal containers or means of transport for animals
- c) In accordance with Point b, Clause 2, Article 39 of the Veterinary Law;
- d) Comply with Point e, Clause 2 of this Article.

4. Quarantine of animal(s) at the place of destination:

The local animal quarantine organization at the destination may conduct quarantine only in the following cases:

- a) Animal(s) are from an another province without a health certificate issued by the local animal quarantine organization of the locality where the animals departed;
- b) The health certificate for the animal(s) is invalid;
- c) The local animal quarantine organization detects fraudulent exchanges or addition/removal of animal breeds without permission of quarantine authorities;
- d) The local animal organization detects animals that show signs of disease or are suspected to have contagious diseases.

### Section 5 Quarantine of Terrestrial Animals Participating in Fairs, Exhibitions, Performing Arts, Sports Competitions; Terrestrial Animal Products Participating in Fairs and Exhibitions; Sending and Receiving Pathological Materials

**Article 16.** Quarantine of terrestrial animals participating in fairs, exhibitions, sports competitions, performing arts; terrestrial animal products participating in fairs and exhibitions: shall be conducted according to Article 51 of the Veterinary Law 79/2015/QH13



## Appendix six

### Animal Welfare – Five Welfare Domains Model

To ensure that the physical, psychological and behavioural needs of captive wild animals are being met, captive facilities must adopt the principles of the **Five Welfare Domains** (Mellor and Reid, 1994).

The **five welfare domains** advocate for management practices that allow animals to experience ‘positive affective states’.

#### Five Welfare Domains Model

##### Physical Domains

1. **Nutrition:** appropriate consumption of nutritious foods is a pleasurable experience  
**Negative influences:** deprivation of food and/or water, poor quality food/water  
**Leading to negative states:** hunger, thirst, nausea, weakness, dizziness  
**Positive influences:** appropriate nutrition, readily available food  
**Leading to positive states:** satiety, consummatory satisfaction, reward
2. **Environmental:** benign conditions offering adaptive choices and variety  
**Negative influences:** environmental challenge (e.g., animals in restricted environments)  
**Leading to negative states:** isolation, fear, boredom, frustration  
**Positive influences:** environmental choice (e.g., animals in enriched, naturalistic environments)  
**Leading to positive states:** contentment, affectionate companionability, security, goal-directed engagement, curiosity

3. **Health:** physically sound animals enjoy good health  
**Negative influences:** disease, injuries  
**Leading to negative states:** pain, distress, discomfort, debility  
**Positive influences:** fitness  
**Leading to positive states:** vitality
4. **Behaviour:** environment-focused and inter-animal activities are satisfying and engaging  
**Negative influences:** behavioural frustration (e.g., social animal held in isolation)  
**Leading to negative states:** boredom, frustration, anger  
**Positive influences:** behavioural expression (e.g., social animal in a secure social group)  
**Leading to positive states:** reward, playfulness, calmness

The negative and positive influences within these four domains lead to the fifth domain, i.e., what the animal experiences due to these influences.

##### Mental Domain

5. **Mental or Affective State:** e.g., animals experience comfort, pleasure, interest and confidence

Incorporation of the five welfare domains within a captive setting would ensure animals are managed in ways that reduce the negative states and promote the positive states.

## Appendix seven

### Animal deaths in circuses reported in the media

- Hờ Nun was an elephant hired by the Hoang Nam circus from an elephant owner in Dak Lak province. In Oct 2011, Hờ Nun died whilst on tour in Quang Nam province. The cause of death was identified as insufficient food, exposure to cold weather and long periods of travel.<sup>102</sup>
- Kham Bun, a reportedly wild caught elephant, was sent to the Hanoi Central Circus from Dak Lak province. Kham Bun reportedly died due to an infection in her leg in August 2010.<sup>103</sup>
- A monkey named Vàng reportedly died at Hanoi Central Circus.<sup>104</sup>
- Two unnamed female monkeys belonging to the Hanoi Central Circus reportedly died while giving birth.<sup>105, 106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> <http://dantri.com.vn/xa-hoi/voi-70-tuoi-cua-mot-doan-xiec-bi-chet-1319693204.htm>

<sup>103</sup> [http://elephant.se/location2.php?location\\_id=1751&show=4](http://elephant.se/location2.php?location_id=1751&show=4)

<sup>104</sup> <http://kienthuc.net.vn/song-4-mau/chuyen-sau-san-khau-cua-nhung-chu-khi-lam-xiec-632644.html>

<sup>105</sup> <http://kienthuc.net.vn/song-4-mau/chuyen-sau-san-khau-cua-nhung-chu-khi-lam-xiec-632644.html>

<sup>106</sup> <http://afamily.vn/doi-song/can-canh-mot-ngay-lao-dong-vat-va-cua-nhung-chu-khi-trong-rap-xiec-o-hanoi-2016020711184533.chn>

## Appendix eight

### Deaths due to circus elephants in Vietnam

- On 23rd December 2014, a 40-year-old captive elephant from Binh Minh Circus killed a 12-year old boy in Duc Manh, Dak Nong. News reports suggest the boy was one of several people feeding the elephant fruits prior to a performance in the Central Stadium in Duc Manh. The elephant was reported to have hit the boy with its trunk.<sup>107</sup>
- On 16th October 2011, a captive elephant from the Central Circus (Vietnam Circus Federation) killed an 11-year-old girl after she tried to feed it at a circus in Lao Cai city.<sup>108</sup>
- In April 2010, a circus elephant from the Sao Mai circus troupe killed a 13-year-old boy after he reportedly taunted it in Dong Nai province.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> <http://www.tinmoi.vn/voi-doan-xiec-dung-voi-quan-quat-chet-be-trai-12-tuoi-011339762.html>

<sup>108</sup> <http://www.tinmoi.vn/voi-doan-xiec-dung-voi-quan-quat-chet-be-trai-12-tuoi-011339762.html>

<sup>109</sup> <https://m.vietnambreakingnews.com/2010/04/13-year-old-boy-fatally-taunts-circus-elephant/> and <http://vnexpress.net/tin-tuc/thoi-su/voi-xiec-quat-chet-mot-hoc-sinh-lop-6-2160089.html>





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