

MEDIA RELEASE



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Inspiring Animal Acts - A Day At The Circus!

- FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE -

"...how excited the animals were to be performing – those wagging tails were a giveaway!"

The usual fanfare of introductory music and the call of 'Welcome to the Circus' rang out as we sat eagerly peering through the large enclosed Circus Ring unsure of what we were about to see. The lions were obviously going to be the first animal act of the Show.

Without much delay a 'clown' found himself surrounded by 6 lions all ready to receive their afternoon treats as reward for their actions.

There was no ring of fire and no whips. Just a clown (the animal trainer) his little bag of meaty treats and his lions. The 'tricks' were simple. Sit on a box and roar like a big male lion can, lie alongside each other and roll-over, and lay still while another lion jumps over you. Nothing cruel or unnatural, nothing forced and certainly nothing opposed by any of the lions. The only unnatural behaviour to be seen during the entire act was a lioness insisting on receiving a huge cuddle from her trainer.

Throughout the rest of the Show, a mix of animal shows highlighted the skills of two pigs – one rolling a ball into the soccer net to score – and score he did – he received a treat for his effort. Monkeys rode on ponies as the ponies moved around the ring. Dogs with tails wagging outwitted the clown as they showed off their skills to jump, to roll over and to play hide'n'seek in a barrel.

After many wonderful human performances the Show was over – leaving us all with no doubts on how comfortable each of the animal acts were and in fact how excited the animals were to be performing – those wagging tails were a giveaway!

We were privileged to be allowed behind the scenes – to go behind the Big Top and check out the enclosures of all of the species. The performing horses were all housed under a marquee – while those not performing for the day happily grazed in an open pen. The pigs, goats, and dogs all had their own open pens and easy access sheltering trailers, and the monkeys were more occupied with their sugar cane treats than worrying about the strangers peering at them.

Last – but not least – the lions. Wow! We had read claims by animal rights activists that these 'wild exotic' animals were being cruelly housed in small cages with no exercise, no shelter and unable to go about a normal routine. What we saw was the absolute opposite. The trailers the lions travel in are their night time beds and access to these is available all day. The trailers are fully reverse-cycle air-conditioned. Stretched from the side of the trailers into what is a large penned enclosure were two shade sails providing ample shelter and shade. Within the enclosure a large platform for climbing or stretching out on, multiple balls, and rubber implements to ensure exercise and enrichment is freely available whenever they are in the mood.

It should be noted – the lions are 20th generation – born and raised in the care of their trainer. They are as domesticated as any pet dog or cat. Previous Government legislation restricted – in fact disallowed the big cats to be outside of their trailers. Stardust Circus insisted upon having the extended pens, being instrumental in having the legislation changed to what is now a mandatory requirement.

Claims the animals are over-stressed by their workload and the noise are also unfounded. The performances are held just once per day for two out five weekdays, while they perform twice on each

day of the weekend. Not exactly an extreme schedule. During the Shows – music is playing the entire time. This music is designed to mute out all other noises from the audience and allows the trainer to use vocal commands to remind the animals of the next part of the act. No different to our pets who have to endure their owner’s loud televisions, war zones from gaming, or heavy metal blasting from their I-pods.

All in all – a great afternoon was spent watching the faces of the many children in awe of the lions, in fits of laughter at the dogs and monkeys and wishing they could own one of the ponies. An introduction to animals, one that could easily blossom into our next generation of conservationists, veterinarians or zoo keepers, otherwise their afternoon would probably have been spent nose-deep in a computer game on an I-pad.

Exhibited Animals in Australia and those who work with them are governed by some of the strictest rules & guidelines in the World. The venues, attractions and animals are constantly inspected and the health of the animals is paramount. The conditions and welfare are the difference between being allowed to continue vs being shut-down. Fifty plus years ago that was very different. Today there is no room for cruelty and there is little scope for making mistakes. Every customer and person walking through the entry gate is a potential ‘reporter’ of a problem. It’s a different space to those old days of animal abuse, rings of fire and chains around their ankles.

Before you believe the rhetoric – before you imagine those horrid stories told in movies from a by-gone era – go and see the truth first-hand – rather than jumping on the animal rights bandwagon that could see the demise of animals being kept across our country.

Animal Care Australia is a national incorporated association representing the interests of all animal hobbyists and encourages the welfare of all animals within our care. The association has a strong committee composed of representatives for each major animal group. Via our member clubs we represent some 150,000 people.

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