



May 4, 2017

Brian Schuman, CEO
Fair Productions
Sent via email: brianschuman@gmail.com

John Caracciolo, CEO
JVC Broadcasting
Sent via email: johnc@jvcbroadcasting.com

Dear Mr. Schuman and Mr. Caracciolo,

We write to you in opposition to the “Banana Derby” monkey rodeo shows scheduled to take place during the Brookhaven Fair. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask that you reconsider these events – for the good of both the monkeys and public perception of your event.

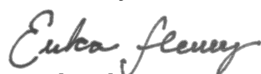
While it may seem amusing on the surface, the monkeys used in these spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many monkey rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that they are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough for many people to boycott such events.

The entire lifetime of a primate is negatively affected when they are exploited for entertainment. As infants, they are removed from their mothers at a very early age – *years* before they would naturally separate. They are trained using methods that intimidate and inhibit their innate behaviors. Even then, the intelligence and unpredictable nature of these wild animals means that they often can only be used for a short time as actors before they become too independent, unmanageable, and dangerous. Primates are then deemed useless to the entertainment industry, and sold into situations that range from uncomfortable to downright harmful. The lucky ones are able to spend the remaining years of their life in a primate sanctuary.

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance is a coalition of eleven of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for close to 700 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. Our advocacy position statement on monkey rodeos is attached. Also included is a fact sheet from the Humane Society of the United States and a collection of expert opinions which detail concerns about the public safety of your attendees and the substandard living conditions of the monkeys.

Recently, fairs and sporting events have witnessed the negative publicity and protests that performing monkey shows can bring to an otherwise successful event. The Alachua, FL County Fair has forsworn the Banana Derby, and last month it was announced that the York Revolution baseball team is no longer hosting monkey rodeos, after they were subjected to protests in 2016. Increasingly, organizations are forswearing the usage of primates to entertain. The Brookhaven Fair would be wise to update its programming to account for this shift in public interest.

Sincerely,


Erika Fleury
Program Director



Position Statement Monkey Rodeos

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA), a coalition of eleven primate sanctuaries in the U.S. and Canada, which cares for over six hundred seventy nonhuman primates, is opposed to “monkey rodeo” shows.

While it may seem amusing on the surface, the monkeys used in these archaic spectacles are poorly treated. Although the records of many monkey rental operators are generally less than stellar, and training and housing conditions can be incredibly stressful (and often abusive), the simple fact that they are forced to dress up and perform on cue in a terribly unnatural situation is reason enough for many people to boycott such events. "Inappropriate portrayals of non-human primates in such a manner have extremely negative consequences for both the welfare of the individual animal and the welfare and conservation concerns of primates in general," explains Elizabeth Lonsdorf, PhD, Professor of Animal Behavior at Franklin and Marshall College, and Vice President for Education and Outreach, the International Primatological Society.

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Monkey rodeos are dangerous and frightening to the monkeys, and potentially harmful to the audience as well. Monkeys can carry diseases transmissible to humans, and they can attack. They are wild animals and remain wild, regardless of how many years they have been forced to “train” with a human being.

Increasingly, corporations and other organizations, including sports teams, are wisely and compassionately forswearing the usage of primates to entertain. We encourage the public to avoid monkey rodeos, for the health and safety of the human and nonhuman primates in attendance.

“Cowboy Monkey” Acts are Abusive to Primates

“[T]his is a thoroughly disreputable practice, animal abuse for cash, cheap thrills for a few bucks and all at the monkeys’ expense.”

Gary Kuehn, DVM,
zoo veterinarian for
23 years (retired)

“These monkeys are being put in a stressful situation where they could be seriously injured or killed.”

Kristin Mealiffe,
Primate Keeper,
Oakland Zoo

“The high accelerations coupled with abrupt turns and stops ... may result in head, neck, or back injuries.”

Margaret Whittaker,
consultant with 25
years of experience
working with captive
wildlife

“It is my expert opinion that these cruel and inhumane spectacles should be stopped immediately.”

Gail Laule, President,
Active Environments

“Cowboy monkey” acts feature one or more capuchin monkeys dressed in a cowboy outfit and tethered to a saddle on the back of border collies who run at high speeds around a field herding sheep. The dogs can reach speeds of up to 30 m.p.h. and abruptly stop, start, turn, lie down, and stand up, causing the monkey to be violently jerked forwards and backwards and slide wildly from side to side.

Inhumane and Demeaning Spectacle

Although marketed as an “amusement” act, many people find this show offensive and upsetting as they recognize that it is undoubtedly frightening and harmful to the helpless monkeys who may suffer psychological distress and risk serious physical injuries.

Subjected to high, repetitive head accelerations—similar to what rodeo participants or passengers involved in motor vehicle accidents experience—the monkeys are especially vulnerable to neck injuries, such as whiplash. The dog may also inadvertently run the monkey into objects, such as walls, fences, and poles. In one online video, a dog stumbles and rolls near a fence with the monkey on his back, which could have resulted in the monkey being seriously injured or killed had he struck the fence.

Public Safety Concerns

Capuchins are small, but dangerous monkeys who can be aggressive and have been involved in numerous escapes and attacks. During “cowboy monkey” events, the monkey is not under the control of a handler. The public would be at risk if a monkey got loose from the dog or if a dog became startled, frightened, or distracted and charged off the field. Primates can inflict severe injuries and transmit deadly diseases.

Substandard Living Conditions

Capuchins are highly intelligent, curious, and energetic primates who, in the wild, spend most of their time in trees—foraging, climbing, jumping, socializing, and exploring their surroundings. In traveling animal displays, the monkeys are confined to small cages, often alone, and are unable to express natural behaviors. These grossly substandard living conditions cause primates to develop neurotic and self-destructive behaviors.

Exhibitor Problems

Tim Lepard of Wild Thang Productions performs under the name “Team Ghost Riders.” In 2011, Lepard was issued two summonses by New Hampshire Fish and Game for failure to obtain a state exhibitor permit and for allowing the public to touch the monkey. Lepard has also been cited by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for violating the minimum standards of the federal Animal Welfare Act, such as keeping animals in unsanitary conditions, failure to provide adequate crowd management and safety barriers, inadequate shelter, improper food storage, failure to dispose of expired deworming and heartworm preventative medications, and repeatedly being unavailable for animal welfare inspections. Several years ago, Lepard’s monkeys, dogs, and sheep died in his travel trailer from carbon monoxide poisoning.

In 2012, the USDA issued an official warning against Tommy Lucia, who performs under the name “Whiplash the Cowboy Monkey,” for exhibiting without a federal license. Lucia has also been cited by the USDA for failure to provide a program of veterinary care and environment enrichment plan to promote the psychological well-being of primates. Lucia’s monkey reportedly attacked a boy, scratching him on the cheek while filming a commercial.



FACTS ABOUT “MONKEY RODEOS”

This is a rare example of animal abuse that affects two species at the same time. Not only are monkey rodeos cruel and inhumane for both monkeys and the dogs forced to carry them, they set a terrible example for society in condoning the treatment of animals as mere playthings.

—Dr. Craig Stanford, Professor of Biological Sciences and Anthropology, University of Southern California (USC); Co-Director, USC Jane Goodall Research Center

Inappropriate portrayals of non-human primates in such a manner has extremely negative consequences for both the welfare of the individual animal and the welfare and conservation concerns of primates in general.

—Dr. Elizabeth Lonsdorf, Professor of Animal Behavior, Franklin & Marshall College

Performing primate acts are harmful to monkeys and children. These performing acts cause monkeys physical discomfort and psychological distress. They send the message to children that it is OK to bully, disrespect, and exploit other beings to entertain oneself.

—Christine L. Buckmaster, Primatologist

When I observed these ‘cowboy monkeys’ performing, I saw fear, anxiety, and—the saddest of all—a blank expression of resignation and hopelessness, what psychologists refer to as ‘learned helplessness.’

—Kari Bagnall, Founder and Executive Director, Jungle Friends Primate Sanctuary

The public learns from these spectacles that monkeys are disposable and can be used for sadistic entertainment purposes. Is this what communities wish to promote?

—Dr. Dorothy Fragaszy, Former President, International Primatological Society, and Author of *The Complete Capuchin*

Monkey rodeos are dangerous and frightening to the monkeys and potentially harmful to the audience as well. Capuchin monkeys are wild animals and remain wild, regardless of how many years they have been forced to ‘train’ with a human being.

—Erika Fleury, Program Director, North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance

These cruel rodeos are completely unnatural, frightening, and stressful for monkeys. These highly intelligent, yet extremely wild creatures, are powerless to escape the repeated trauma of exhibition and the long hours on the road to the next show.

—Dr. Carla Haddix, D.V.M.