



December 19, 2016

Center for Great Apes
Wauchula, FL
Patti Ragan, Founder

NFL
Roger Goodell, Commissioner
Via email: roger.goodell@nfl.com

Chimpanzee Sanctuary
Northwest
Cle Elum, WA
JB Mulcahy, Co-Director

Dear Mr. Goodell,

Chimp Haven
Keithville, LA
Cathy Spraez,
President and CEO

We write to you in response to the NFL Films Presents special "Monkeys Riding Dogs: The Ghost Riders" that aired on December 10th. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask that you reconsider promoting such sideshow acts – for the good of both the monkeys and public perception of the NFL and NFL Films.

Chimps, Inc.
Bend, OR
Lesley Day, Founder

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. "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", explains Elizabeth Lonsdorf, PhD, Professor of Animal Behavior at Franklin and Marshall College, and former Vice President for Education and Outreach, the International Primatological Society.

Cleveland Amory Black
Beauty Ranch
Murchison, TX
Noelle Almrud,
Director of Animal Care

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 may 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.

Fauna Foundation
Quebec, Canada
Gloria Grow, Founder

Our advocacy position statement on the usage of trained primates in entertainment is attached. Also included is a fact sheet from the Humane Society of the United States, which details concerns about the public safety of your fans and the substandard living conditions of the monkeys. You'll note it also lists specific violations against Tim Leopard of Wild Thang Productions, who runs "Team Ghost Riders" and whose monkeys were the focus of NFL Films' program.

Jungle Friends
Gainesville, FL
Kari Bagnall, Founder

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance is a coalition of eight of the leading primate sanctuaries on the continent. In our sanctuaries, we care for over 640 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how monkeys raised to entertain are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

Primate Rescue Center
Nicholasville, KY
April Truitt, Founder

Recently, state and local fairs have witnessed the negative publicity and protesting that performing monkey shows can bring to an otherwise successful event. Increasingly, corporations and other organizations, including the Lexington Legends baseball team, are forswearing the usage of primates to entertain. In August Minor League Baseball announced that they do not encourage the use of any animal acts during games. NFL and its holdings would be wise to update its programming to account for this shift in public interest.

Erika Fleury
Program Director

Sincerely,

Erika Fleury, Program Director



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*Erika Fleury
Program Director*

Advocacy Position Statement Performing Primates

The North American Primate Sanctuary Alliance (NAPSA) is opposed to the use of trained primates for entertainment. As experts in the field of primate care, we respectfully ask the public not to support public events featuring trained monkeys and apes.

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

NAPSA was founded in 2010 by the directors of seven of the leading chimpanzee sanctuaries on the continent. In our member sanctuaries, we care for over 600 primates, many of whom were formerly used in entertainment. We see how primates are forever damaged by the work forced upon them, and we look forward to the day when such archaic practices are no longer permitted.

For more information:

["Apes in Media and Commercial Performances," Association of Zoos & Aquariums](#)

["Bengals Shocking Half-Time 'Cowboy Monkey' Has a Cruel History," The Dodo](#)

["Chimpanzees in Entertainment," ChimpCARE](#)

["Great Apes in Entertainment," Jane Goodall Institute Australia](#)

["Impact of Visual Context on Public Perceptions of Non-Human Primate Performers," K. A. Leighty et al.](#)

“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.

