"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."
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> **Kristin Mealiffe, Primate Keeper, Oakland Zoo**

> "The high accelerations coupled with abrupt turns and stops … may result in head, neck, or back injuries."
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> **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."
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> **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 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.