

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FROM: HUMANE ACTION PITTSBURGH
REGARDING: LOOSE CAMEL AND INJURIES AT SYRIA SHRINE CIRCUS

We are saddened to hear of the incident that took place today at PPG Paints Arena with the Shrine Circus, but not at all surprised. Animal circuses, especially those whom the Syria Shrine Circus subcontracts their animals from, have a long history of animal abuse and public safety violations.

We sent a registered letter to Mr. Paul Leavy asking where he was contracting this year's animals from and did not receive a response. Last year, each and every company the Syria Shrine contracted with had extensive violations.

2017's tigers were from Nerger's Tigers. Exhibitors Judit and Juergen Nerger formerly worked for and obtained the tigers they use from the notorious (and now-defunct) Hawthorn Corporation, which accumulated \$272,500 in USDA penalties and had its license suspended twice under the Animal Welfare Act.

Syria Shrine's camels in 2017 came from America's Show Camels. This is a relatively new outfit co-owned by Ian Garden, whose family operates the Garden Brothers Circus (formerly the Piccadilly Circus). Ian was a camel and zebra trainer for Garden Brothers when the USDA issued the circus manager an official warning when a zebra died of suffocation after getting his jaw and hoof caught in another animal's halter. This agency also issued a citation for failing to use appropriate methods to prevent, control, diagnose, and treat diseases when it found two camels with the circus who had ringworm lesions on their heads, necks, and legs.

Mitchel Kalmanson operates the Lester Kalmanson Agency, which is the insurance underwriter named in the Syria Shiner's partial insurance policy. Mitchel Kalmanson has supplied tigers to Shrine circus shows and has had multiple safety-related citations. Other records show that Kalmanson had four tigers die while on tour in Mexico. And following two dangerous tiger escapes from the circus, including one where a tiger attacked an endangered elephant, Kalmanson was ordered to pay a fine and to cease and desist from violating the law.

In terms of the Shiner's arguments that they need the tools in the Bullhook Plus ordinance for "safety" arguments, this incident proves that argument false. It's very important to note: leading industry groups - AZA and GFAS - require restricted or protected contact (as opposed to free contact like the circus uses) because it's unsafe to handle dangerous wild animals in free contact. In fact, the USDA warns its own inspectors to avoid getting close to elephants. These weapons clearly DO NOT provide a meaningful boost to public safety.

Lastly, it's curious that the Shriners vehemently objected to the Pittsburgh Police Department acting as monitors, yet they were called to assist at the scene when the Syria Shriners own monitors and handlers lost control of the situation.