



# Wild Animals in Circuses

Queen's Speech Debate, 11 June 2014

RSPCA CYMRU BRIEFING

On June 11th 2014, the National Assembly for Wales will debate the recent Queen's Speech. The debate provides the opportunity for the Welsh Government to outline its future intentions concerning wild animals in circuses, following the issue's disappointing omission from the Queen's Speech. RSPCA Cymru believes the Welsh Government has a key role to play in urging the UK Government to act and, crucially, if inaction continues, should bring forward their own legislative proposals.

## Queen's Speech Silence on Ban

- In Wales and across the UK, wild animals continue to suffer in the circus environment. Circus Mondao, for example, is currently touring Wales, with the show including the use of a number of wild animals.
- **RSPCA Cymru is bitterly disappointed that an anticipated announcement in the Queen's Speech concerning a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses did not materialise.**
- **A ban on the use of wild animals in circuses is supported by the vast majority of the general public.** Polling from 2006 suggested 76 per cent of the Welsh general public ban supported a ban<sup>1</sup>, and indications suggest public opinion has strengthened further in recent years.
- **The lack of an announcement in the Queen's Speech is at odds with the UK Government's previous commitments to take action.** In January 2013, it confirmed it was "determined to ban the use of animals in circuses" and said it "pledged to take tough, prompt action"<sup>2</sup>.

## Situation in Wales

- The Welsh Government has stated previously that it was happy to allow the UK Government to legislate on its behalf on this issue – but it appears Parliamentary time may now be allowed to run out.
- In June 2013, the Minister for Natural Resources and Food confirmed he favoured "working with the UK Government and seeking an extension to the offence of using a wild animal in a circus to Wales"<sup>3</sup>. The passing of a Legislative Consent Memorandum would allow such an extension
- Should it wish, however, **the Welsh Government may introduce its own legislation.** A backbench legislative proposal was previously introduced by Rebecca Evans AM<sup>4</sup>.

## What happens next?

- It has been claimed Downing Street is still considering the possibility of legislating to introduce a ban<sup>5</sup>.
- RSPCA and other campaigners will keep the pressure on the UK Government to bring forward simple proposals immediately which will implement an outright ban. Given its interest in any legislation extending to Wales, the Welsh Government has a potentially key role in encouraging action.
- It is also hoped the Welsh Government will commit their intention to implement a Wales-wide ban, if inaction from Westminster continues. Having already highlighted its support for a ban, **the Queen's Speech debate on June 11th provides the Welsh Government with the opportunity to make such a commitment.**

<sup>1</sup> An Ipsos MORI poll in Wales for RSPCA Cymru

<sup>2</sup> Hansard, 13 January 2013

<sup>3</sup> Written Assembly Question, WAQ64896, 19 June 2013

<sup>4</sup> Bill-039, National Assembly for Wales, pre-ballot proposal.

<sup>5</sup> BBC's Norman Smith (BBCNormanS) tweeted: 'No 10 say will keep under review option of legislation to ban wild animals in circuses #queensspeech'