



# Statement

*from the press office*

Wednesday 8 March 2006

## **Government Recognises And Acts On Welfare Problems Of Wild Animals In Circuses**

The Government's announcement this morning that it is to prevent certain wild animals from travelling with circuses has been warmly received by the RSPCA, which has long campaigned for such a ban to be included in the Animal Welfare Bill.

"It remains to be seen which species of animals will fall into the ban, and the Society continues to urge that all wild animals be spared the indignity and inadequate welfare facilities associated with performing and travelling with a circus," said Dr Rob Atkinson, Head of Wildlife Department, RSPCA.

"However, this news, and the accompanying announcement that the winter quarters in which circus animals are kept will be subject to licensing and inspection, is a positive step forward - and one which the RSPCA welcomes," continued Dr Atkinson.

"We hope the drafting of these regulations are given immediate attention and can be implemented when the Animal Welfare Bill comes into force in October. This would avoid prolonging the welfare problems endured by the elephant, lions, tigers, bear, camels, and zebra that are still kept by three UK circuses."

-ends-

### **Notes to editors:**

- The Animal Welfare Bill has its Report Stage and Third Reading in the House of Commons on Tuesday 14 March, before it is passed for debate in the House of Lords.
- The Animal Welfare Bill is an enabling piece of legislation, which allows for secondary legislation to follow its enactment.
- The announcement today by Animal Welfare Minister Ben Bradshaw commits the Government to use a regulation under clause 10 of the Animal Welfare Bill to ban the use in travelling circuses of certain non-domesticated species whose welfare needs cannot be satisfactorily met in that environment. Furthermore, to subject circuses that keep animals to zoo licensing standards, and subject individuals and organisations who train performing animals to inspection. A Code of Practice will also be introduced for circuses and performing animals to deal with issues such as training activities, trainer competences and accommodation needs for animals while travelling.