

Responding in detail to a list of questions posed by *George Herald* regarding Raffray's allegations, McLaren Circus owner, David McLaren rejected her claims, saying the Ban Animal Trading group harasses his circus via Facebook in every town they visit.

**According to the group you said your animals are born in captivity.** Yes, all my animals are born in captivity, they are from a bloodline that have been in captivity for generations. All my circus animals have been with me since they were babies. They are raised into the circus environment and are conditioned to this lifestyle.

**They claim this gives the animals stress.** Any animal that lives a life under constant stress will show serious signs of it. Stressed animals will not eat correctly, they will pace constantly and not be in good physical condition. All my animals eat well, they show none of these “signs of stress”. They are all in good physical condition, therefore common sense will tell you they should be mentally in a good state too.

**Can you tell us if you have seen any such symptoms expressed by your animals - like pacing up and down, swaying or lashing out at anyone?** All my animals show and express normal behaviour. The only time my cats pace is feeding time, which is normal for all big cats in captivity as they are eager to get to their food. Once they get hold of their food they relax. None of my animals sway. None of my animals lash out at people either. None of my animals are chained or tortured. None of my animals have any marks or sores on them. I am not sure where they are getting this information from?

**They also claim that animals in cages offer no educational value - how true is this? Is it part of the circus to also inform? Cages?**

**What is their definition of a “cage”?** My big cats have a play enclosure attached to their transport trailer. They are not confined to little boxes or tiny cages. They have the freedom to play on the grass and socialise in their play area. They are in captivity like every big cat is that is in a zoo/park/sanctuary. All the lions and tigers that are kept in zoos/parks/sanctuaries are in captivity and all of them are enclosed.

No big cat in captivity is free and like the one in the wild. We all manipulate their environments to create a comfortable home for them. We all charge a fee for them to be exhibited to the public.

Educational: I do believe the circus has an educational value, it's a place where many people get up close to animals and see them for the first time.

**Have your animals lost their natural instinct since they have been with you?** My big cats remain "wild animals" though they have never hunted or killed for their food. We have conditioned them to this lifestyle. They do not have the desire to go hunt and kill for food or even defend their territory. They do not feel threatened by us. They do not need to migrate for food. They do not have to protect their food or family. They do not face the challenges that wild big cats face, so part of their natural instincts has never been challenged yet as they have not been put into the situation for face them. Many natural instincts are only expressed when an animal is placed in a particular situation. Circus animals are well cared for and do not face the challenges that their wild counterparts do.

**How do you get the animals to perform tricks? Are they tricked into doing it or is food withheld?** All my animals perform to their natural abilities. Lions and tigers jump and leap naturally so they are trained to do that. None of them ride motorbikes or do unnatural things. They are all trained by means of positive reinforcement. They are only on display for a few minutes per performance. They are rewarded treats for their positive behaviour. We have never withheld food from any of our animals. They are fed a balanced diet and are closely monitored by our own vets, the Department of Agriculture, and the SPCA too. No one receives more inspections than my circus.