

States That Ban the Use of Exotic or Wild Animals in Traveling Shows or Circuses

By: Janet Kaminski Leduc, Chief Attorney
February 17, 2022 | 2022-R-0026

Issue

This report identifies (1) states that ban the use of certain exotic or wild animals in traveling acts or circuses and (2) recent legislation proposed in Connecticut to do the same.

Summary

Six states ban the use of certain exotic or wild animals in traveling animal acts or circuses: California, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York. A traveling animal act is generally a performance that requires an animal to be transported to or from the performance location in a mobile housing facility (e.g., truck, trailer, rail car).

Table 1 identifies the general prohibitions and penalties for violations, which vary by state. For the full details of each law, including any exemptions (e.g., zoos, permanent facilities, educational programs), see the linked citations.

Connecticut legislators proposed the following seven bills to prohibit the use of exotic or wild animals in traveling animal acts during the last three regular legislative sessions: [SB 66 \(2021\)](#), [HB 5800 \(2021\)](#), [SB 413 \(2020\)](#), [HB 5024 \(2019\)](#), [HB 5248 \(2019\)](#), [HB 6001 \(2019\)](#), and [HB 6017 \(2019\)](#). Each bill was referred to the Environment Committee, which took no further action with one exception. The committee scheduled a public hearing on [SB 413](#) in 2020, but the hearing was not held due to the legislature's COVID-19 closure.

Table 1: State Bans on Animals in Traveling Shows or Circuses

State and Citation	General Prohibition	Penalty
<p>California Cal. Fish & Game Code §§ 2207 - 2210</p>	<p>Sponsoring, conducting, or operating a circus that uses any animal other than a domesticated dog, cat, or horse</p> <p>Exhibiting or using any animal other than a domesticated dog, cat, or horse in a circus</p>	<p>Civil penalty of up to \$25,000 for each day of violation</p>
<p>Colorado Colo. Rev. Stat. § 33-1-126</p>	<p>Causing a performance of specified animals, whether wild- or captive-born, in a traveling animal act</p>	<p>Misdemeanor subject to a fine of between \$250 and \$1,000</p>
<p>Hawaii Haw. Code. R. §§ 4-71-6.5 & 4-71-4.3; Haw. Rev. Stat § 150A-14</p>	<p>Using specified animals for a short-term performance or exhibition in circuses, carnivals, or state fairs (e.g., see restricted list)</p>	<p>Misdemeanor subject to a fine of between \$5,000 and \$20,000</p> <p>Class C felony subject to a fine of between \$50,000 and \$200,000 if intentionally transports restricted animal without a permit</p>
<p>Illinois 720 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/48-11; 730 Ill. Comp. Stat. 5/5-4.5-55</p>	<p>Knowingly allowing an African or Asian elephant that is protected under the federal Endangered Species Act to participate in a traveling animal act</p>	<p>Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail, a fine of between \$75 and \$2,500, or both</p>
<p>New Jersey N.J. Stat. §§ 23:2A-16 & 23:2A-10</p>	<p>Using a wild or exotic animal, as defined in the law, in a traveling animal act</p>	<p>Civil penalty of up to \$25,000 for each day of violation</p>
<p>New York N.Y. Agric. & Mkts. Law § 380 (see also, N.Y. Envtl. Conserv. Law § 11-0540)</p>	<p>Using, or causing to be used, African, Asian, or Indian elephants in any entertainment act (e.g., circus, carnival, parade)</p>	<p>Civil penalty of up to \$1,000 per violation</p>

JKL:kl