

Sunday, July 23, 2000

## Bear ban barred circus

Provincial rules made big top fold tents last month

By BRENDAN ELLIOTT -- The Daily News

This week the Tarzan Zerbini Circus, touring the province under the Shriners flag, faced protesters and provincial laws that forced it to buy bigger overnight cages.

Last month the George Carden Circus had an even harder time: it made one stop in Truro before the Department of Natural Resources kicked it out of the province.

"We came with bears, and your new regulations stipulate circuses in Nova Scotia can't have bears," said George Carden Circus promoter John Walsh. "It's the only province that bans bears, I might add."

The Missouri-based circus also didn't hold a wildlife import permit, another requirement under the Standards for Exhibiting Circus Animals in Nova Scotia regulations.

Walsh said the double infraction resulted in a fine "in the neighbourhood of \$250 to \$270." The circus had to cancel its 10 remaining dates. Walsh said the circus was unaware of the new provincial regulations, enacted in June 1999. "I know ignorance is no excuse, but we were given no notification of the changes," he said.

He recommended the province work with the federal government, so circuses crossing into Canada can be informed of Nova Scotia's rules. After the Truro fiasco, the circus travelled to Newfoundland, where the SPCA there was highly critical of the international entertainers.

"SPCA investigators observed the trailer containing the ponies and elephants to be without adequate ventilation ... (They) recorded the length of time the animals were sealed in this compartment ... to be in excess of seven hours," reads a report posted to the Internet site, Zoocheck Canada ([www.zoocheck.com](http://www.zoocheck.com)).

"SPCA investigators also observed five bears, confined in very small cages for 23 hours per day.

"Investigators noted that fecal contamination of foodstuffs had occurred in this cage," the SPCA said.

The circus is still in Newfoundland and is scheduled to make its way to Prince Edward Island within the next few days.