

# Chapter 15

## Animals in Entertainment



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A zoo is a prison  
—Nadine Gordimer

**Abstract** The entertainment sector is a lucrative industry that provides employment to millions of people worldwide and generates significant economic impact. The industry encompasses a wide range of animal applications, including zoos, dolphinariums, circuses, and the use of animals in film productions. This often raises serious concerns regarding the welfare of individual animals and species conservation. This chapter explores examples of animal use in entertainment, examining the economic aspects of the industry and addressing the ethical controversies involved. To improve the welfare of animals in entertainment, several policy proposals are suggested, including financial incentives for transitioning to sanctuary models, taxation and regulation of animal use, and the promotion of innovative technologies as alternatives. These policy proposals aim to ensure the humane treatment of animals while maintaining the economic viability of the entertainment sector.

### Economic and Cultural Impact of Animals in Entertainment

The entertainment sector is not only one of the most visible areas of the cultural and creative industries but also one of significant economic importance.<sup>1</sup> Despite this, the topic of entertainment is often underestimated in academic literature and frequently dismissed with surprising ease as unworthy of serious analysis.<sup>2</sup> While research on

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<sup>1</sup> McKee et al. (2014).

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<sup>2</sup> Collis (2017).

entertainment remains largely scattered,<sup>3</sup> it is not entirely neglected. The literature contains various attempts to define entertainment, with perspectives ranging from product-oriented explanations to interpretations based on cultural experience and communication.<sup>4</sup> Entertainment can also be characterized by its audience-oriented, commercial nature.<sup>5</sup> From a business model perspective, entertainment is a form of culture that is commercially driven, does not primarily rely on government subsidies or patronage, and exists to the extent that an audience is willing to pay for it. A key aspect of entertainment is its experiential component, which is transient, time-limited, and intangible.<sup>6</sup> In other words, at the core of why audiences consume entertainment lies the satisfaction or “pleasure” they derive from it.<sup>7</sup> The modern entertainment industry—including film production, radio, television, the Internet, video games, and sports—is a multi-billion-dollar business. The total global revenue of the entertainment and media (E&M) industry increased by 5% in 2023, reaching \$2.8 trillion.<sup>8</sup> It is important to emphasize that art and entertainment share common characteristics that are crucial for a country’s economic development: they involve the creation, production, and distribution of products and services that rely on creativity and human capital as fundamental inputs.<sup>9</sup> However, animals are also used to provide entertainment. In fact, the entertainment industry encompasses a wide range of animal applications, from zoos and dolphinariums to circuses and the use of animals in film productions. Unfortunately, this often raises serious concerns regarding both the welfare of individual animals and species conservation. While some academic publications have addressed the issue of animals in entertainment, the topic still requires more interdisciplinary research.<sup>10</sup>

## **Animals in Zoos and Dolphinariums**

### ***Zoos***

Zoos are among the most frequently visited tourist attractions worldwide and can be found in almost every country. The United States and Germany are among the nations with the highest number of such facilities (Table 15.1).

Over the years, zoos have evolved from private menageries and game reserves, accessible only to individuals of high social status, into institutions open to the general

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<sup>3</sup> Vogel (2020).

<sup>4</sup> Cavalcanti et al. (2022).

<sup>5</sup> Collis (2017).

<sup>6</sup> Sayre and King (2010).

<sup>7</sup> McKee et al. (2014).

<sup>8</sup> PwC (2024).

<sup>9</sup> International Labour Office (2023a).

<sup>10</sup> Finn (n.d.).

**Table 15.1** Number of zoos by country (Top 10 countries)

United States	350
Germany	316
United Kingdom	118
Australia	104
Japan	96
Brazil	80
India	66
Canada	40
China	34
Czech Republic	34

Based on: World Population Review, *Zoos By Country 2026*, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/zoos-by-country><sup>11</sup>

public. Today, these facilities strive to be recognized not merely as entertainment venues but as institutions dedicated to wildlife conservation, public education, and scientific research.<sup>12</sup> Increasingly, there is a call to enhance the sustainability of their operations, with animal welfare becoming a key objective of modern zoos—both from the perspective of the animals themselves and that of human visitors.<sup>13</sup> In recent years, the issue of animal welfare in zoos has gained prominence, leading to the introduction of stricter legal regulations and calls for improved standards.<sup>14</sup>

The existence of zoos has sparked extensive debates between supporters and opponents of this form of recreation, with some animal rights activists advocating for zoo boycotts. These differing perspectives are also reflected in academic literature, where opinions on the popularity of zoos vary. Research in this area is somewhat limited, partly due to the lack of an international approach, including comprehensive studies on zoo attendance worldwide.<sup>15</sup> Attendance rates vary across countries and regions, influenced by factors such as population size, economic conditions, education, and cultural attitudes.<sup>16</sup> For instance, in 2023, Zoo, Tierpark, and Aquarium Berlin collectively welcomed 5.6 million visitors, who observed over 25,000 animals representing approximately 1,500 species. These facilities also employed around 630 staff members.<sup>17</sup> Some zoos and aquariums set attendance records and rank among the most visited attractions globally. According to data published by the Themed Entertainment Association, Disney's Animal Kingdom in Lake Buena Vista, Florida, United States, attracted around 14 million visitors in 2019, while the most frequently

<sup>11</sup> World Population Review (2004).

<sup>12</sup> Fa et al. (2014), Hutchins et al. (2018), Traylor-Holzer et al. (2019), Escribano et al. (2021).

<sup>13</sup> Rose and Riley (2022).

<sup>14</sup> Whitham and Wielebnowski (2013).

<sup>15</sup> Davey (2007).

<sup>16</sup> Davey (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Zoo Berlin (n.d.).

visited aquarium that year was Chimelong Ocean Kingdom in Hengqin, China, with an annual attendance of about 12 million visitors.<sup>18</sup> Collaboration and knowledge exchange play a crucial role in helping zoos fulfill their conservation objectives, particularly in programs focused on the restoration of endangered species populations. One international organization dedicated to collecting and sharing data on plants and animals in botanical gardens, zoos, aquariums, and related conservation institutions is Species360, which has been operating for 50 years. Another key organization in the development of zoos and aquariums in the fields of conservation, education, science, and recreation is the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Based on the activities of such organizations, examples of the economic impact of zoos have been analyzed (Table 15.2).

The presence of zoological gardens influences the region in which they are located, partly because they provide employment opportunities for individuals, primarily from the local community, and attract visitors who contribute financially to the area. This has been confirmed, for example, by analyses conducted in Nigeria, which demonstrated that the local community derives social and economic benefits from the existence of a zoo.<sup>19</sup> Some zoological gardens see this as an additional justification for their existence. One such institution, which attracts 1.7 million visitors annually, reports that for every dollar received from tax funds, the zoo generated an average of 10 USD in economic benefits for the county in which it operates, thanks to expenditures by visitors from outside the county.<sup>20</sup> Over a four-year period, these visitors contributed a total revenue of \$275 million, averaging \$69 million USD annually, with approximately 58,115 of them staying in hotels during their trip to the zoo.<sup>21</sup> However, not everyone agrees with this perspective on zoological gardens. Although zoos strive to be perceived as more than just providers of entertainment, some studies confirm that people visit zoos primarily for leisure.<sup>22</sup> The authors' previous research on opinions about zoological gardens revealed that visitors generally view these places positively, focusing primarily on expenditures, pricing, and organizational aspects, while paying little attention to animal welfare or the conservation and educational functions that zoos seek to emphasize.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, the role of providing entertainment to visitors is not sufficient to justify removing animals from their natural habitats and placing them in enclosures.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Themed Entertainment Association (2022).

<sup>19</sup> Muhammad et al. (2022).

<sup>20</sup> Cincinnati Zoo (2023).

<sup>21</sup> Cincinnati Zoo (2023).

<sup>22</sup> Linke and Winterin (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Kapera and Kapera (2021).

<sup>24</sup> Catibog-Sinha (2011).

**Table 15.2** AZA—Zoo and aquarium characteristic and statistic

Accreditation	253 accredited zoos, aquariums, and related facilities in 13 countries
Animals in AZA-accredited facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 780,000 animals in the care of AZA-accredited zoo and aquarium professionals</li> <li>• Over 8,600 species</li> <li>• Over 800 Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, and Extinct In The Wild species as categorized by the IUCN Red List</li> </ul>
Conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$252.2 million was spent on field conservation in 119 countries in 2022</li> <li>• 232 species and subspecies that benefited are listed as Endangered or Threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act</li> <li>• \$29 million was spent on AZA SAFE: Saving Animals From Extinction species programs in 2022</li> </ul>
Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contributed more than \$22.5 billion to U.S. economy</li> <li>• Supported more than 198,000 full-time jobs in the U.S</li> <li>• Served more than 200 million annual visitors worldwide (183 million in the U.S.)</li> </ul>

Based on: Association of Zoos and Aquariums, *Zoo and Aquarium Statistics*, <https://www.aza.org/zoo-and-aquarium-statistics><sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Association of Zoos and Aquariums (n.d.).

## *Dolphinariums*

The issue of ensuring animal welfare is particularly evident in dolphinariums. Around the world, dolphins are still being captured from wild populations for use in these facilities. More than 60% of all captive dolphins globally are held in just five countries: China (23%), Japan (16%), the USA (13%), Mexico (8%), and Russia (5%).<sup>26</sup> Within the EU, cetaceans are kept in 32 dolphinariums across 15 member states, with a total of 309 whales and dolphins in captivity.<sup>27</sup> According to trade data, between 1979 and 2008, a total of 285 live whales and dolphins were imported into the EU, despite EU Regulation CITES No. 338/97, which prohibits the import of cetaceans primarily for commercial purposes.<sup>28</sup> Dolphinariums attract visitors and generate revenue. Visitors can watch dolphin shows, and some facilities also offer “swimming with dolphins.” Additionally, dolphin-assisted therapy or paid souvenir photos with the animals are available. Research indicates that 93% of dolphin facilities worldwide offer dolphin performances, 66% provide swimming experiences, 75% allow selfies, and 23% offer therapy sessions involving dolphins.<sup>29</sup> A single dolphin can generate between 400,000 and \$2 million annually for a facility, meaning that all captive dolphins in the tourism industry collectively generate between \$1.1 and \$5.5 billion per year.<sup>30</sup> However, keeping these animals in captivity remains highly controversial. Within the EU, studies have been conducted, and data from dolphinariums have been gathered to assess compliance with legal requirements, including the Zoo Directive 1999/22, EU Regulation CITES 338/97, and other relevant regulations. The main findings from these analyses are presented below<sup>31</sup>:

- Of the 34 dolphinariums in the EU included in this report, only 14 indicated on their websites that they conducted research on cetaceans.
- Of the 13 dolphinariums visited, only four had informational boards describing the exhibited animal species.
- Among the 18 shows analyzed, 17 did not inform guests about the natural distribution of the species, eight did not discuss dolphins as mammals, and none of the 18 programs mentioned the conservation status of the species.

Dolphinariums in the EU do not meet the biological needs of captive cetaceans and fail to comply with the requirements of Directive 1999/22. Society is becoming increasingly aware of animal welfare issues and the problems associated with keeping dolphins in captivity. Despite the current high level of acceptance of dolphin entertainment, concerns about welfare are emerging: 52% of respondents believe that dolphins suffer physically and emotionally in captivity, while 47% think that no dolphin would perform tricks, kiss people, or allow them to ride on its back of its

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<sup>26</sup> WAP (n.d.).

<sup>27</sup> Whale and Dolphin Conservation (n.d.).

<sup>28</sup> Whale and Dolphin Conservation (n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> WAP (n.d.).

<sup>30</sup> WAP (n.d.).

<sup>31</sup> Whale and Dolphin Conservation (n.d.).

own free will.<sup>32</sup> The same report indicates that 80% of respondents would prefer to see dolphins in the wild if given the opportunity, and one in four visitors stated that watching these animals in a dolphinarium feels wrong and that all such facilities should be closed.<sup>33</sup> In relation to this issue, analyses by the China Cetacean Alliance should also be considered. This is a coalition of international animal protection organizations, including the Animal Welfare Institute, Endangered Species Fund, Environment & Animal Society Taiwan, Hong Kong Dolphin Conservation Society, Kuroshio Ocean Education Foundation, Marine Connection, Nature University, and Whale and Dolphin Conservation. Their research highlights numerous problems associated with the use of animals in such facilities. The authors raise concerns regarding, for example, the structural parameters of the enclosures, including their depth, arguing that they fail to meet the complex behavioral needs of the species they exhibit. Many animals are kept in tanks that require maintenance work, and display tanks often lack shelters for the animals. Exhibit aquariums tend to be structurally simplistic, with little to no topographical variation, which can lead to boredom among the animals.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the high number of visitors generates excessive noise around the tanks, especially since they are often located near loudspeakers playing music during performances. In some cases, staff behavior has also been observed to directly cause stress and discomfort to the animals. The living conditions of dolphins vary depending on the country, its regulations, and the standards in place. However, in such facilities, the needs of captive dolphins are often secondary to those of the audience, which watches and interacts with them. Some of these establishments attempt to distance themselves from the perception that their shows are purely for entertainment and emphasize their educational efforts. However, keeping dolphins in captivity for entertainment does not provide significant educational benefits. The authors of the aforementioned report stress that these facilities fail to fully utilize their potential in education.<sup>35</sup>

## Animals in Circuses

For many years, the circus has been a significant form of international popular entertainment while remaining a rarely studied subject in academic research.<sup>36</sup> This is partly because the circus is considered a minor performing art and partly due to the difficulty of collecting reliable quantitative data on the industry.<sup>37</sup> The modern

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<sup>32</sup> WAP (n.d.).

<sup>33</sup> WAP (n.d.).

<sup>34</sup> China Cetacean Alliance (n.d.).

<sup>35</sup> China Cetacean Alliance (n.d.).

<sup>36</sup> Malamud and Stoddart (2000).

<sup>37</sup> Zanola (2007).

circus, in its current form, has existed for approximately 250 years and has undergone significant development over time.<sup>38</sup> It is estimated that between 1,600 and 2,100 circus companies are currently registered in the EU, with most operating in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and Belgium.<sup>39</sup> The circus sector in the EU employs between 11,000 and 15,000 people, a relatively small fraction of the 8.7 million individuals working in the cultural sector within the EU.<sup>40</sup> In 2018, about one-fifth of circus troupes had revenues exceeding 500,000 euros, three-quarters generated over 1 million euros, and one in three troupes attracted more than 30,000 spectators. Meanwhile, one in ten reported having fewer than 1,000 viewers.<sup>41</sup> Although contemporary circuses are moving away from the use of animals in performances, this practice is still maintained in some countries, and the biological needs of animals are not always treated as a priority.<sup>42</sup> Issues include inadequate diets, limited living space, poor transport conditions, insufficient social interactions, and concerns regarding training methods and the attitudes of handlers.<sup>43</sup> In recent years, the use of animals in circuses has become the subject of global debate, leading to the implementation of regulations in various countries regarding the use and exhibition of animals in circus performances. Measures banning or restricting the use of animals in circuses have already been adopted in approximately one-quarter of the world's countries. Most EU member states have introduced either a total or partial ban on the use of wild animals in circuses, though the scope of these regulations varies by country.<sup>44</sup> Representatives of the circus entertainment sector hold different views on the use of animals in performances. The European Circus Association (ECA), which represents over 130 circuses, festivals, animal trainers, and performers across 29 countries—including nearly all renowned European circuses and affiliated members worldwide<sup>45</sup>—asserts that “circus animals are educated and stimulated in their physical, mental, and intellectual development”.<sup>46</sup> However, research indicates that circus animals are routinely exposed to nutritional deficiencies, diseases, pathological conditions, and stress, raising concerns about their welfare (Table 15.3).<sup>47</sup>

Further analyses indicate the economic benefits of reducing the use of wild animals in travelling circuses. It is emphasized that such a reduction is a more cost-effective option than the expenses associated with meeting regulatory requirements

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<sup>38</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; Vroonhof et al. (2020).

<sup>39</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; Vroonhof et al. (2020).

<sup>40</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; Vroonhof et al. (2020).

<sup>41</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture; Vroonhof et al. (2020).

<sup>42</sup> Mota-Rojas et al. (2022).

<sup>43</sup> Mota-Rojas et al. (2022).

<sup>44</sup> Kapera and Kapera (2022).

<sup>45</sup> European Circus Association (n.d.).

<sup>46</sup> European Circus Association (n.d.).

<sup>47</sup> Mota-Rojas et al. (2022).

**Table 15.3** Regulations on the ban or restrictions on the use of animals in circuses (as of February 2025)

Country	Scope of restrictions
<i>North and South America</i>	
Argentina	Local bans on the use of wild animals in circuses in over 20 cities including a ban in the city of Buenos Aires
Bolivia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild and domestic animals in circuses
Brazil:	Local bans on the use of animals in circuses in 11 states and over 20 cities
Canada	Local bans on the use of animals in circuses in 33 municipal jurisdictions including Vancouver
Colombia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses; Local ban on the use of animals in circuses in the capital, Bogota
Costa Rica	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Ecuador	Nationwide ban on the use of native wild animals; restrictions on the use of exotic animals; ban on the import of both native and exotic wild animals with circuses
El Salvador	Nationwide ban on the “Income, use or abuse of wildlife species in all kinds of entertainment”
Guatemala	Nationwide ban on the use of animals in circuses
Mexico	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Panama	Nationwide ban prohibiting “entry of wild animals for use in static and travelling circuses and similar shows”
Paraguay	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Peru	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses as well as a local ban on all animals in Magdalena del Mar
USA	112 partial or full bans on performing animals in jurisdictions in the US, in 34 states
<i>Europe</i>	
Armenia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Austria	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Belgium	Nationwide ban on the use of most wild animals in circuses (Parrots and camel are classed as domestic)
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Nationwide ban on all animals in circuses
Bulgaria	Nationwide ban on certain wild animal species in circuses, variety shows and other entertainment facilities
Croatia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Czech Republic	Nationwide ban on the use of certain species in circuses; from January 2022 circuses prohibited from obtaining and breeding wild animals and using those born after this date
Cyprus	Nationwide ban on all animals in circuses
Denmark	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Estonia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses

(continued)

**Table 15.3** (continued)

Country	Scope of restrictions
Finland	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses and travelling animal shows
France	Nationwide ban on use of wild animals for public display/travelling circuses; prohibits keeping, acquisition, breeding and transport of animals for such use
Germany	Local in bans in more 90 towns and cities
Greece	Nationwide ban on all animals in circuses
Hungary	Nationwide ban on the use of wild-caught animals in circuses, the purchase and training of elephants and primates for circus performances and the purchase, training and use of CITES (Appendix 1) listed species in circuses
Ireland	Ban on wild animals in circuses
Latvia	Nationwide restrictions effectively banning the use of wild-caught animals
Lithuania	Nationwide ban on the use of wild mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians in circuses
Luxembourg	Nationwide ban on wild animals in circuses
Macedonia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Malta	Nationwide ban on all animals for performances, exhibitions, shows or training for the circus
The Netherlands	Nationwide ban on the use and transport of animals in circuses, with exemptions for certain, mostly domestic, species
Norway	Use of wild species effectively banned nationwide – positive list of permitted animals only includes domestic animals (apart from camels)
Poland	Nationwide ban on the use of wild-born animals in circuses
Portugal	Nationwide ban restricting the use of wild animals in circuses
Romania	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses (apart from certain exotic bird species and cetaceans)
Scotland	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Serbia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Slovakia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Slovenia	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Spain	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Sweden	Nationwide ban on the use of certain species in circuses
UK	Scotland, England, and Wales have passed nationwide bans on the use of wild animals in circuses; no such legislation is currently in place in Northern Ireland. Over 200 local authorities have bans on animal circuses (more than two-thirds of these ban all performing animals, the remainder ban just wild animals)
Ukraine	Nationwide ban on “mobile menageries” and the transportation of wild animals for use in circus performances
<i>Australia</i>	

(continued)

**Table 15.3** (continued)

Country	Scope of restrictions
Australia	Local bans on the use of animals in circuses in several towns including Hobsons Bay, Surf Coast Shire, Parramata, and Lismore
<i>Asia</i>	
India	Nationwide ban on the use of certain species in circuses
Iran	Use of wild animals in circuses effectively banned nationwide (no permits issued)
Israel	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Lebanon	Nationwide ban on the use of certain species in circuses
Singapore	Nationwide ban on the use of wild animals in circuses
Taiwan	Nationwide prohibition on the import or export of protected wildlife for circuses
Uzbekistan	Nationwide prohibition of private ownership of wild animals in semi-wild conditions, artificial habitats or captivity, and keeping in public and travelling circuses

Source Federal Circus Bill, *Worldwide Summary*, <https://www.federalcircusbill.org/briefings/worldwide-summary><sup>48</sup>

and conducting inspections. Attention is also drawn to taxpayer savings and the fact that circuses featuring human performers can create more jobs.<sup>49</sup> The reduction in animal use in circuses, along with public opinion considerations, has led circuses in recent years to seek new ways to attract audiences. One approach has been to replace live animals with life-sized holographic projections.

## Animals in Films

Animals have played a fundamental role in the development and expansion of various cinematographic and audiovisual activities.<sup>50</sup> Their use in films has been common since the inception of cinema and has now become an extremely profitable industry.<sup>51</sup> However, the involvement of animals in the film industry raises concerns due to its negative impact on individual animal welfare, the potential increase in animal trade, and its effects on environmental conservation. Moreover, the portrayal of animals in films and literature often reinforces human superiority and speciesist ideology by disregarding animal autonomy, emotional experiences, and desires.<sup>52</sup> The issue also has a moral dimension, particularly regarding the impact of real or simulated

<sup>48</sup> Federal Circus Bill (n.d.).

<sup>49</sup> Animal Defenders International (n.d.).

<sup>50</sup> De Damborenea Martín et al. (2023).

<sup>51</sup> Martinez et al. (2022).

<sup>52</sup> Zavitz and Kielbiski (2021).

animal suffering on audiences.<sup>53</sup> The use of animals in filmmaking requires careful planning and has legal implications. Some countries attempt to regulate these issues through appropriate legislation or with the involvement of various organizations. As early as 1937, the British Parliament passed the Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act, which prohibited the exhibition and distribution of films in which animals may have suffered. This law, which bans the screening or distribution of cinematographic films produced in circumstances where animals may have been subjected to suffering, stipulates that no person may publicly exhibit or supply any cinematographic film (produced in the United Kingdom or elsewhere) for public exhibition if, in connection with its production, any scene depicted in the film was staged or directed in such a way as to involve the cruel infliction of pain or terror on any animal or the cruel provocation of any animal into a state of fury.<sup>54</sup> In the European Union, many of the principles outlined in various relevant directives could potentially be extrapolated or adapted to regulate this industry. However, certain areas concerning the use of animals in film and television productions remain unregulated by law.<sup>55</sup> In addition to legal regulations, it is also important to mention the role of organizations dedicated to ensuring the safety and well-being of animals used in film productions. One such organization is American Humane, which helps guarantee the safety and humane treatment of animal actors. American Humane's oversight extends to film, television, commercials, music videos, and computer-generated imagery (CGI). The organization is involved from the pre-production planning stage, monitors animals on set during production, and enforces guidelines. It also conducts investigations into allegations of mistreatment and cruelty, imposing sanctions on productions that fail to meet humane treatment standards. American Humane holds the exclusive right to award the "No Animals Were Harmed" certification to productions that comply with strict animal welfare standards. This phrase was first used in 1989 and has since become a registered trademark.<sup>56</sup> The organization has also developed the Guidelines for the Safe Use of Animals in Filmed Media, which aim to ensure the safety and well-being of all animal actors. Through its program, American Humane works to protect approximately 100,000 animals in over 1,000 productions annually, ensuring their safety and humane treatment with the help of Certified Animal Safety Representatives. Many celebrities collaborate with American Humane, advocating for animal rights. This is not the only organization working in this field. Animal Protection New Mexico (APNM) also takes a rigorous approach to the use of animals in film. It advocates for alternatives such as CGI, stock footage, animation, or other methods that do not involve live animals.<sup>57</sup> Film and television production companies have also introduced their own guidelines for animal use. For example, Disney requires that any proposed use of live animals be reviewed for compliance with its policies by the Disney Animals, Science, and Environment department and

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<sup>53</sup> Wilkins (1981).

<sup>54</sup> *Cinematograph Films (Animals) Act 1937, 1937 CHAPTER 59, 1 Edw 8 and 1 Geo 6.*

<sup>55</sup> De Damborenea Martín et al. (2023).

<sup>56</sup> Malamud (2012).

<sup>57</sup> Animal Protection New Mexico (n.d.).

recommends adherence to American Humane Association guidelines.<sup>58</sup> Whenever possible, productions featuring animals should include educational elements related to animal welfare or conservation. Furthermore, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) has outlined best practices for the use of animals in performances, events, and productions. According to these guidelines, filmmakers should consider at the planning stage whether live animals are truly necessary for a production and assess the risks posed to individual animals involved.<sup>59</sup>

## Other Examples of Animal Use in Entertainment

Beyond the previously mentioned examples, animals are also used in entertainment in various other ways. This final section discusses some of these cases, highlighting potential directions for further research and the need for in-depth analysis. One such issue requiring examination is the killing of animals for entertainment. Given that a ban on commercial hunting is unlikely in the near future, this phenomenon should first be analyzed in terms of existing legal regulations in many countries. Studies on hunting tourism conducted by the authors emphasize the complexity of this issue.<sup>60</sup> Focusing solely on legal provisions, the following discussion presents current topics that have been subject to varying degrees of regulatory attempts in Poland. Implementing such regulations is challenging, as evidenced by two recent examples. A proposed regulation requiring periodic medical and psychological examinations for individuals licensed to own firearms for hunting purposes met with strong opposition from hunters in Poland. Similarly, hunters reacted negatively to an attempt to regulate hunting stands due to a legal loophole concerning the lack of provisions specifying procedures and rules for constructing such structures. Meanwhile, the scale of these installations raises concerns. According to information from the Polish Hunting Association (Polski Związek Łowiecki), Poland, with an area of approximately 312,000 km<sup>2</sup>, has 116,000 hunting stands, with an additional 17,000 belonging to State Forests (Lasy Państwowe) and Game Breeding Centers (Ośrodki Hodowli Zwierzyny)<sup>61</sup>—resulting in an average of one hunting stand per 2.3 km<sup>2</sup>.

The current legal framework and a certain degree of regulatory ineffectiveness are reflected in an official response received by the authors following an inquiry to government authorities:

“The Ministry of Climate and Environment, within the framework of interministerial consultations on the draft amendment to the Construction Law and certain other laws, raised concerns regarding the regulation of the construction of hunting structures. However, this concern was deemed beyond the scope of the proposed

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<sup>58</sup> Disney (n.d.).

<sup>59</sup> RSPCA (n.d.)

<sup>60</sup> Kapera and Kapera (2020).

<sup>61</sup> PZŁ (n.d.).

legislative changes, which were of a derogatory nature, and was therefore not considered.” Legal challenges related to hunting are addressed differently across countries. In Europe, hunters make up 1.4% of the total population, with the highest number residing in France.<sup>62</sup> Analyses conducted in the United States in 2022 indicate that 14.4 million people over the age of 16 participated in hunting, with hunters spending \$45.2 billion on hunting-related activities.<sup>63</sup> However, hunting, including recreational hunting, does not encompass the entirety of the issue. Other controversial forms of animal use in entertainment include dog and cockfighting, where animals are forced into brutal fights to the death. Another widely debated practice is bullfighting, which exemplifies a human-animal relationship based on agonistic struggles initiated by humans. During a corrida, the matador kills the bull in the arena before a live audience. Literature on the subject examines the economic impact of such events, including employment opportunities on cattle ranches, rural labor, and the roles of entrepreneurs, toreros, and other workers.<sup>64</sup> Estimates for a single event, Feria del Toro, indicate a total economic impact of €5.3 million.<sup>65</sup> However, whether such financial benefits justify the killing of animals for entertainment is a question the authors deliberately leave unanswered.

## **Revamping Animal Entertainment: Humane Economic and Regulatory Policies**

The use of animals in entertainment will not vanish rapidly. Unfortunately, options for animals already in captivity are limited. However, their welfare can and should be better ensured. Keeping wild animals in captivity requires meeting certain biological needs related to housing, nutrition, health, and mental well-being. To this end, broader legal regulations are needed in areas where such measures have not yet been implemented. In zoos, welfare standards should be strengthened wherever possible, particularly regarding enclosure sizes, diet, socialization, and the prevention of captive breeding. In some industries, more decisive actions aimed at the complete cessation of such practices would be advisable.

In the arts and entertainment industry, there is currently a growing demand for entertainment services based on modern technology, which provide instant access to content and enhance experiences through artificial intelligence and virtual reality effects.<sup>66</sup> The increasing application of technology in the entertainment sector has driven demand for animation, visual effects (VFX), and gaming, which is directly

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<sup>62</sup> Benko et al. (2020).

<sup>63</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2022).

<sup>64</sup> Sánchez-Rivero et al. (2020).

<sup>65</sup> Sánchez-Rivero et al. (2020).

<sup>66</sup> International Labour Office (2023b).

linked to broader technological advancements, including the availability of affordable internet access. At the same time, the industry is also paying attention to environmental issues. Through their work, professionals—including artists, writers, and performers—as well as businesses and organizations can engage audiences in sustainability movements. With a commitment to environmental issues, the sector can influence consumer choices beyond the realm of art, advocating for stronger interactions between cultural work, economic contributions, and environmental responsibility.

Film, in its various forms, is one way to convey this kind of message. For example, remote camera feeds or webcams can be used by conservation organizations to raise awareness about specific species.<sup>67</sup> Further scientific research is also necessary to determine the number of animals used in entertainment, describe the type and duration of work performed by these animals, investigate the frequency of animal welfare-related incidents, and explore alternative methods to using live animals in film and television.<sup>68</sup>

A set of dedicated economic policies and regulatory reforms can be postulated to improve the well-being of animals used in entertainment and gradually make progress in their substitution with animal free entertainment activities that represent animals nonetheless. Starting with economic proposals, four key ones include:

- *Taxation and financial incentives.* Implementing taxes on businesses that use animals for entertainment can discourage their use by increasing operational costs. Conversely, providing tax breaks and grants for organizations that develop and use alternative technologies, such as virtual reality or animatronics, can incentivize innovation and reduce reliance on live animals. In the United Kingdom, for example, the government offers tax relief for film and television productions that use computer-generated imagery (CGI) instead of live animals, encouraging the industry to adopt more humane practices.
- *Research and development financing.* Allocate public funds for research and development of humane alternatives to animal-based entertainment.
- *Funding for Animal Welfare.* Establishing government-funded programs to support the rescue, rehabilitation, and care of animals previously used in entertainment can ensure their well-being. Additionally, creating financial incentives for zoos and aquariums to transition to sanctuary models that prioritize animal welfare and conservation can promote ethical treatment. The United States, for example, has several grant programs, such as the Animal Welfare Act Grant Program, which provide funding for the care and rehabilitation of animals used in entertainment.
- *Funding a Transition to Sanctuaries.* Create financial incentives for zoos and aquariums to transition to sanctuary models that prioritize animal welfare and conservation.

Regulatory proposals, alongside economic incentives, can ensure a more rapid and certain achievement of animal welfare goals. These span from outright

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<sup>67</sup> Silk et al. (2021).

<sup>68</sup> Hitchens et al. (2021).

bans to measures to promote substitutive animal representation technologies in entertainment. Specifically,

- *Bans and restrictions.* Enforcing bans on the use of certain species in entertainment, particularly those that are highly intelligent or endangered, can protect vulnerable animals. Prohibiting the use of animals in specific types of performances, such as circuses and dolphin shows, can further safeguard their welfare. Implementing strict regulations on the conditions under which animals can be kept and used in entertainment, including minimum space requirements and enrichment standards, can ensure humane treatment. For example, in 2017, Italy banned the use of animals in circuses and travelling shows, joining a growing list of countries that have implemented similar bans to protect animal welfare.
- *Mandatory assessments and oversight.* Requiring regular welfare assessments and inspections of facilities that use animals for entertainment can ensure compliance with animal welfare standards. Mandating transparency and public reporting on the health and well-being of animals in entertainment can hold organizations accountable. Establishing independent oversight bodies to monitor and enforce animal welfare standards can provide an additional layer of protection. The American Humane Association's "No Animals Were Harmed" program, for example, monitors the use of animals in film and television productions, ensuring their welfare and providing certification for productions that meet their standards.
- *Reporting and transparency.* Mandate transparency and public reporting on the health and well-being of animals in entertainment.
- *Substitution with innovative technologies.* Promoting the use of virtual reality, augmented reality, and animatronics as alternatives to live animals in entertainment can reduce the need for live animals and enhance audience experiences. Encouraging the development of realistic and humane digital representations of animals for use in films, theme parks, and educational programs can further support this transition. Supporting public education campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of using technology over live animals in entertainment can foster public support. An example of this is Disney's "The Lion King" (2019), which used advanced CGI technology to create lifelike animal characters, demonstrating the potential of innovative technologies to replace live animals in entertainment.
- *Educational campaigns.* Support public education campaigns to raise awareness about the benefits of using technology over live animals in entertainment.

In addition to the above proposals, it is key that governments work with international organizations to develop and implement global standards for the treatment of animals in entertainment. This includes revising existing treaties and agreements to include provisions for the protection of animals used in entertainment, and facilitating international cooperation to share best practices and technologies for humane alternatives to animal-based entertainment. For example, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) regulates the trade of endangered species, including those used in entertainment, to ensure their protection and conservation.

## Conclusions

Today, consumers have more choices than ever before regarding the type of entertainment they prefer, enabling them to make informed decisions. Every ticket purchased for venues where animals suffer provides an economic incentive for their breeding and extraction from the wild. This chapter highlighted the urgent need for standardized regulations, improved monitoring, and stricter oversight in this area, especially given the growing public opposition to certain uses of animals and the ethical concerns they raise.

For entertainment venues that also serve educational or conservation purposes, and where the discontinuation of such activities is unlikely, greater attention must be given to animal welfare. This includes enhancing standards for housing, nutrition, health care, and mental well-being, as well as implementing educational and scientific initiatives and participating in wildlife conservation programs, including those conducted in natural habitats.

The entertainment sector is also witnessing a clear demand for services based on modern technology. The example of a circus discussed here demonstrates that technological advancements, such as virtual reality and animatronics, can effectively replace the exploitation of animals in performances. These innovations not only offer ethical alternatives but also enhance the entertainment experience for audiences. Furthermore, the arts and entertainment industry is experiencing increased interest and debate surrounding environmental sustainability. This sector is uniquely positioned to play a key role in raising awareness of environmental issues, promoting conservation efforts, and fostering a more compassionate and responsible approach to entertainment. By leveraging technology and adopting humane practices, the industry can contribute to the well-being of both animals and the planet.

To improve the welfare of animals in entertainment, several policy proposals were suggested, including financial incentives for transitioning to sanctuary models, taxation and regulation of animal use, and the promotion of innovative technologies as alternatives. These policy proposals aim to ensure the humane treatment of animals while maintaining the economic viability of the entertainment sector.

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