

Animal Activist Groups Use Bully Tactics Once Again

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Animal rights organisations have once again launched a campaign against a long-standing, legal event which was due to be held at Woodbank Garden Centre — despite the event meeting all regulatory and welfare standards and operating within the law.

The controversy stems from a breeders' meet organised by the International Herpetological Society (IHS), where members are permitted to sell surplus captive-bred reptiles and amphibians. The event, which has been held for many years, has faced renewed criticism from animal activist groups such as the Animal Protection Agency (APA), World Animal Protection, and Freedom for Animals.

However, according to IHS and the venue organisers, these activist groups are engaging in what they describe as **"bully tactics"** — an ongoing strategy the organisations have used for decades in attempts to shut down legal animal-related events.

The IHS strongly defends the legality and ethics of the event. **"The event is lawful, with recent amendments to the Animal Welfare Act clearly confirming that members are permitted to sell surplus stock at such meets,"** an IHS spokesperson stated. **"These events have never had any animal welfare issues, and we always ensure high welfare standards."**

Every breeders' meet is attended by two independent veterinarians, as well as representatives from the local council, DEFRA (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), and other regulatory bodies. No wild-caught animals are permitted at these events — only captive-bred species may be sold. Furthermore, animals are housed in transport containers for short-term movement only, with continuous monitoring by vets to ensure welfare requirements are met at all times.

In response to recent concerns, Woodbank Garden Centre confirmed that the breeders' event is a hired function, entirely separate from its pet shop operations. A meeting with the local council in late May resulted in **no concerns over licensing or animal welfare**. A few procedural recommendations were made and promptly implemented, according to the organisers.

"This latest attack is part of a broader strategy by activist groups whose ultimate goal is to end all forms of animal captivity — including regulated events, pet ownership, and responsible breeding," said one of the event's organisers. **"These organisations generate significant revenue through emotional campaigns, often misleading the public to support their anti-captivity agenda."**

Critics argue that while such groups claim to protect animals, their long-term objective may be the complete removal of animals from private care and regulated exhibition — an approach many see as extreme and counterproductive.

As of now, the breeders' meet at Woodbank Garden Centre remains fully compliant with the law and continues to operate with transparency and oversight. Organisers say they will not be deterred by what they view as coordinated misinformation campaigns aimed at shutting down legal and responsible animal-related activities.

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