AVIAN FLU OUTBREAK PROMPTS APPEAL FOR UK PIGEON RACING BAN

Tuesday 16 December, 2014

Animal Rights Group Calls On Defra to Protect Humans *and* Birds by Banning Gruelling Cross-Channel Races

London – When news hit that recent avian flu outbreaks in Europe may have arisen in the wild bird population, PETA US – whose motto reads, in part, that "animals are not ours to use for entertainment or abuse in any other way" – sent an urgent letter to Secretary of State Elizabeth Truss calling on the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) to ban all pigeon racing in the UK. PETA US' 2012 investigation into cross-Channel racing showed that birds who survive the gruelling races could potentially be returning to the UK after being exposed to diseases abroad if they have landed on foreign farms, consumed contaminated water or come into contact with wild birds and/or pigeons raced at the same time but originating in other countries.

"Pigeons suffer severe fatigue and deprivation during these cruel and deadly races, and there are possible health risks for human beings as well," says PETA UK Director Mimi Bekhechi. "PETA UK joins PETA US in calling on government officials to put the health of UK citizens and animals first by enforcing a complete ban."

The recent undercover investigation by PETA US reveals that thousands of pigeons are crammed into filthy, congested cages and transported to and from continental Europe – on journeys which can last up to seven days.

The Minister previously stated that Defra would only ban pigeon racing if there were evidence of a European disease risk. The recent avian flu outbreak has affected Western Europe and the UK and has already led to the killing of more than 200,000 ducks, turkeys and chickens.

A copy of the letter to Defra is available here. For more information on PETA US' investigation into cross-Channel pigeon racing, please visit **PETA.org.uk**.

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