

Dowty Sports & Social set to play host once again to animal suffering and illegal sale of wildlife

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The Dowty Sports & Social Club in Gloucester has been described as “gullible in the extreme” for agreeing to host another reptile and amphibian market on its premises on 8th December 2024. The Social Club hosted a similar event last December, which animal groups claim involved illegal animal selling based on the evidence they gathered. In August this year, the Social Club disallowed a planned reptile market that was organised by the South West Reptile Club (SWRC), which is why campaigners are so surprised to see the event back.

Animal suffering is part and parcel of reptile and amphibian markets. Sensitive and vulnerable wild animals such as lizards, snakes and frogs are typically confined in tiny, plastic, takeaway containers and treated like inanimate objects. Little or no thought is given to the species-specific welfare needs of the animals. Animals are routinely denied food, water, shelter and, in many cases, the ability to move around.

The trade in pet animals from market stalls is prohibited by law because the makeshift and temporary nature of markets means that animal suffering is inevitable. To get around the law, many market stallholders claim to be non-commercial hobbyists selling a few of their own surplus pets, when in fact they can be operating lucrative, illicit online businesses, with some selling snakes worth thousands of pounds each.

Says Elaine Toland, Director, Animal Protection Agency:

“At best the Social Club is gullible in the extreme to take at face value any claims that this is merely a gathering of enthusiasts and not a wildlife market. By going ahead with this event, the Club is not only facilitating animal suffering but is also putting the health of venue users at risk.”

Says Dr Charlotte Regan, Wildlife Campaign Manager, World Animal Protection:

“Reptiles and amphibians are sentient animals, capable of experiencing a range of emotions and feelings, such as pleasure, pain, joy, and fear. It is not acceptable to compromise their welfare so that they can be bought and sold like products over market stalls. We call on the Dowty Sports & Social Club to stop hosting these outdated and controversial events.”

Says Laura Walton, Campaigns Manager, Freedom for Animals:

“Reptile and amphibian markets treat sensitive and vulnerable animals like mere commodities, and they are denied even basic necessities. The Dowty Sports and Social should be ashamed for agreeing to host another of these exploitative events - they cause immense suffering and should have no place in our society.”

Reptile and amphibian markets are associated with significant public health risks, particularly from Salmonella bacteria. Even after a market has taken place, a venue can remain contaminated and vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly are particularly at risk.

The Animal Protection Agency, World Animal Protection and Freedom for Animals are working together towards an end to the inhumane trading of wild animals at markets.

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