

Equestrian centre saddled with reptile market gives up the reins

Thursday 7 March, 2024

Bury Farm Equestrian Centre (Mill Rd, Slapton in Buckinghamshire) was due to host a large-scale reptile market on 28 April 2024 but last week informed the Animal Protection Agency that the event would not be taking place on their premises. Despite this, event organiser, the International Herpetological Society (I.H.S.), is this week still advertising and selling table space for the event. Yesterday, Buckinghamshire Council confirmed that it had also been advised that the reptile market was no longer on the Equestrian Centre's calendar.

Trading in pet animals over market stalls was outlawed in 1983 due to inherent animal welfare problems. The Animal Protection Agency, World Animal Protection and Freedom for Animals are working with local councils and venues to eradicate reptile and amphibian markets in the UK. Evidence gathered at numerous I.H.S. reptile markets invariably shows systematic illegal animal selling and widespread animal suffering. Thousands of animals are offered for sale including lizards, snakes, tortoises and frogs and are typically displayed in small, plastic takeaway containers with little consideration given to their basic welfare needs.

Animal groups suspect that the I.H.S. may now be looking for a new venue and are warning managers of large venues in the area not to accommodate this event. Reptile market organisers typically misdescribe their events as 'shows' or 'breeders' meetings' when in fact they are commercially-driven markets. Buckinghamshire Council has been praised for ensuring that Bury Farm Equestrian Centre was in full possession of the facts and able to take the responsible decision not to host the event.

Says Elaine Toland, Director, Animal Protection Agency:

"The I.H.S. is very well known to mislead venue managers as to the true nature of their events but now appears to be also misleading its own members. It is bizarre that it is still calling on its Facebook page for traders to book stalls at the April event. We are immensely grateful to Buckinghamshire Council for acting so promptly, and very pleased that the Bury Farm Equestrian Centre has refused to host this shameful event."

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

"We welcome the news that the planned reptile market at Bury Farm Equestrian Centre will no longer be taking place. Reptiles and amphibians are sentient animals with complex welfare needs, not commodities to be exploited by the pet trade. Other venues and local authorities across the UK should be extremely wary of hosting these markets; they are outdated events that should have no place in our society."

Says Laura Walton, Campaigns Manager, Freedom for Animals:

"The suffering caused to exotic animals by transporting and displaying them in tiny plastic tubs, for hours on end, often without proper temperature and humidity controls, food or water is an utter disgrace; and the reason why the trading of these animals at markets was banned. So we commend Buckinghamshire Council's proactive response and welcome the news that Bury Farm Equestrian Centre has refused to host the I.H.S.'s April event. These profit-driven markets must be stopped."

The I.H.S. was also turned away from the Marshall Arena, Milton Keynes last year having previously advertised an event there on 3rd September 2023. Evidence gathered from an I.H.S reptile market that took place at the Marshall Arena on 18 June 2023 showed widespread illegal trading.

- For more information, please contact Elaine Toland on 01273 674253 or out of hours on 07986 535024. Images available on request.

Media:



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