

Guildford Council is commended for preventing illegal reptile trading as local venues are warned to be vigilant

Tuesday 11 October, 2022

A planned reptile market at Normandy Village Hall, Guildford on 15 October 2022 has been cancelled by the venue manager following advice from Guildford Council. The Animal Protection Agency (APA) gathered evidence of unlawful animal trading at a reptile market on 31 July 2022 at Normandy Village Hall. Guildford Council examined the evidence and reacted quickly by warning the venue of the likelihood of further illicit activity at Saturday's event. The Council and the venue have been commended by the Animal Protection Agency for preventing animal suffering and upholding the law.

The event on 15 October 2022 had been organised by the Surrey Reptile and Amphibian Society and advertised as a hobbyist "breeders meeting" – although evidence from the July event showed that the event was in fact a commercially-driven market. The law prohibits the trade of pet animals from market stalls as it is impossible to safeguard their welfare in such temporary and makeshift conditions. In response to the cancellation, the Surrey Reptile and Amphibian Society stated on their Facebook page that "we will come back with future events." The Animal Protection Agency is therefore calling on venue managers in Surrey and surrounding areas to be vigilant, and not to accept bookings for any events at which any reptile trading takes place.

Numerous scientific investigations conducted at reptile markets consistently record animals suffering in poor conditions. Captive lizards and snakes require a lot of space and finely controlled temperature, light and humidity, as well as minimal disturbance, to mimic their natural environment. But at reptile markets these animals are commonly displayed in small, plastic takeaway containers with barely enough space to move and subjected to other stressors such as movement handling and noise.

Says Director of the Animal Protection Agency, Elaine Toland:

"The treatment of reptiles at these markets has been described by scientists as 'tantamount to animal abuse'. If dogs and cats were subjected to the same appalling conditions, and treated as inanimate objects, there would be public uproar. We are grateful that the Council and the venue have acted to prevent further such abuse."

Says Director of Freedom for Animals, Dr Andrew Kelly:

"Freedom for Animals is delighted that this reptile market event has been cancelled and would like to congratulate Guildford Council for its actions. It is clear that these 'breeders meetings' are simply covers for illegal trading. It is high time such events were banned and we call on potential venues to reject bookings in the future. We also call on members of the public thinking of getting an 'exotic pet' to think again. Wild animals, even those bred in captivity, are not pets."

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

"Reptiles are sentient animals with complex welfare needs, not commodities to be commercially exploited by the exotic pet trade. Thankfully, the planned event at Normandy Village Hall will no longer be taking place this October. Other venues and local authorities across the UK should be extremely wary of hosting these inhumane reptile markets which not only cause significant animal suffering, but are also highly likely to involve illegal animal trading."

Reptile markets have been largely eradicated from the UK thanks to improved local authority enforcement. The Animal Protection Agency is working with World Animal Protection and Freedom for Animals to ensure that UK reptile markets are ended for good.

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

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