Thousands Of Birds May Die: Peta Us Urges Irish Authorities To Stop King's Cup Pigeon Race Over Open Ocean

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PETA US Seeks Investigation of Irish Pigeon Racers for Apparent Violation of Cruelty Laws in Ireland, Northern Ireland

Dublin – In advance of the upcoming high-stakes international King's Cup pigeon race on 3 July, PETA US sent an urgent letter this morning calling on the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Animal Welfare Officer for the Northern Area to investigate pigeon racers and pigeon-racing clubs in Ireland and Northern Ireland, respectively, for apparent violations of animal-welfare laws.

In the letter, PETA US – whose motto reads, in part, that "animals are not ours to abuse in any way" – points out that Irish pigeon racers force homing pigeons to fly up to 500 miles, encountering adverse weather conditions, predators and other life-threatening dangers, including traversing the English Channel, the Bristol Channel and the Irish Sea. Birds die by the hundreds because of extreme weather, raptors, electric lines, foul play and exhaustion. In last year's King's Cup race from Saint-Allouestre, France, only 40 of 2,807 birds who were initially entered returned within three days – a disastrous outcome that has prompted PETA US to call on Irish authorities to restrict this year's King's Cup race, for which birds are scheduled to be released in Saint-Allouestre, to Ireland.

"Pigeons pay with their lives for the high-stakes bets of Irish pigeon racers", says PETA Director Mimi Bekhechi. "Irish authorities must step in and make sure that this year's King's Cup doesn't mean the deaths of thousands of birds who succumb to extreme weather, predators and drowning on their way home from France."

In the letter, the group points out that the Irish Animal Health and Welfare Act 2013 and the Welfare of Animals Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 prohibit inflicting unnecessary suffering on an animal and the Irish Wildlife Act prohibits injuring a protected wild bird (such as a pigeon).

PETA US' letter is available upon request. For more information about pigeon racing, please visit **PETA.org.uk**.

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