

Underground snake market thwarted thanks to Birmingham City Council and Social Club

Tuesday 15 October, 2024

The Austin Sports & Social Club in Longbridge, Birmingham, has won praise from animal welfare campaigners for seeing off a planned snake market on its premises, due to take place on Saturday 12th October 2024. Birmingham City Council has also been commended for acting on intelligence at short notice to ensure the law was upheld. Given a recent increase in attempts to stage reptile markets, animal welfare organisations are warning venues in Birmingham to tread carefully and not to accept bookings for any reptile-related events.

Trading in pet animals over market stalls is illegal due to the poor welfare conditions that are inherent to temporary, makeshift events. According to scientific research, snakes need to stretch fully for their wellbeing, yet at markets they are often forced to remain coiled in tiny, plastic boxes. As well as lots of space, captive snakes also require carefully controlled environments in terms of temperature, lighting and humidity that are specific to their species, but these needs are neglected at markets.

Reptile market organisers prey on unsuspecting venues by claiming their events are 'shows', 'breeders' meetings' or 'exhibitions' when, in fact, they are commercially-driven markets. After receiving a tip-off giving information about the venue for the secretly organised event, the Animal Protection Agency alerted the Council and the Social Club, and both took action that has been described as "commendable".

Says Elaine Toland, Director, Animal Protection Agency:

"Snakes are sentient and intelligent animals that do not deserve to be subject to the appalling maltreatment that is typical of reptile markets. The Council and the Social Club were given very little time to respond but they pulled out all the stops to ensure illegal trading did not take place. Their actions are commendable."

Says Dr Andrew, Director, Freedom for Animals:

"We would like to thank the Austin Sports & Social Club for taking prompt action to prevent this market from proceeding. It has been well documented that illegal trading takes place at these events, and we are pleased that Birmingham City Council and the Social Club acted on the information provided. We hope that all local authorities and potential venues take similar action in the future."

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

"Reptile markets are inherently associated with a number of highly concerning animal welfare issues. They are outdated events which should have no place in our society. We thank The Austin Sports & Social Club, and Birmingham City Council, for taking decisive action to protect animals."

As well as safeguarding animal welfare, action taken by the Austin Sports & Social Club and Birmingham City Council served to protect human health. Reptile markets present a significant health hazard due to reptile-related salmonellosis, particularly in venues where food and drink are consumed. Post-event contamination is also an issue where vulnerable groups such as children or the elderly are subsequent users of the venue.

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