

## *Media release*

# **Council takes firm action to stop unlawful bird markets**

**The Animal Protection Agency (APA) was today delighted to learn that North West Leicestershire District Council has ruled that no further bird sales will take place in its area. Undercover investigators from APA obtained filmed evidence of illegal trading and birds in poor conditions at a market staged at the Hermitage Leisure Centre on 30 August 2004.**

This particular bird sale was directly referred to recently at a government hearing when the prospect of lifting the current ban on pet markets was discussed. Elaine Toland of APA spelt out to the Select Committee the problems associated with pet markets using the sale at Hermitage Leisure Centre as an example, she says;

*“Local authorities are now becoming more aware of the true nature of these events, that they are commercially-driven, and that even minimal standards of animal welfare cannot be attained. The Council should be commended for taking responsible and decisive action to prevent further breaches of animal welfare legislation.”*

A neighbouring local authority has, however, met with strong criticism from APA. Last Sunday, tens of thousands of birds were on sale at the Staffordshire County Showground in what the APA describes as appalling conditions. Two vets attended the event on behalf of APA and observed sick and distressed birds on sale, some with blood on the walls of their cages. APA undercover investigators captured the poor conditions and animal abuses on film.

Stafford Borough Council, who issued a licence to the organisers, did not even bother to send an inspector along on the day. The Parrot Society, organisers of the market, employed a firm of solicitors to defend their reputation, which now arguably lies in tatters. Despite the lawyers' best attempts to suppress the filmed evidence - which shows widespread animal abuse at their event - yesterday this footage headlined ITV's regional six o'clock news.

The Animal Protection Agency is a brand new organisation to fight the trafficking in wild animals for pets. The group has made pet markets a focus for its campaign as they provide a major outlet for wildlife dealers. As well as working with local authorities to close down these events, APA is also lobbying government to ensure that the current ban on pet markets remains in place.

- For more information, please contact Elaine Toland on 01273 674253

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