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## **Clueless government officials admit “no evidence” to lift ban on pet markets**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has come under fresh attack today following its admission that it has no scientific evidence to defend its claim that lifting the ban on pet markets, as part of the Animal Welfare Bill, will not cause animal suffering. The Animal Protection Agency (APA), a national organisation campaigning against the trade in wild animals for pets, has maintained that pet markets are inherently cruel and that welfare problems are insurmountable.

In correspondence, DEFRA, whilst proffering no research material, simply stated “there is still much work to do on our proposals.” Ben Bradshaw, the minister responsible for the Bill, has been asked by APA why his Department proposed to legalise pet fairs in the first place without a shred of scientific evidence to counter claims by leading scientists that this would amount to ‘licensed cruelty’.

DEFRA also came under severe criticism from the Select Committee, which reviewed the draft Animal Welfare Bill. The Committee highlighted in its report “a significant deficiency in the approach adopted by DEFRA in updating animal welfare legislation.” DEFRA was taken to task for presuming that pet fairs should be legalised without first consulting widely on the issue and for launching the consultation with the question of ‘how’ pet fairs should be regulated without first asking ‘whether’ they should be legalised!

In 1983, sales of pet animals in public places were outlawed, but pet markets, although diminishing, still continue to occur. Typically, birds are housed in temporary, cramped and dirty cages and lizards and snakes are crammed into tiny, plastic cartons.

Says Elaine Toland, Director of APA; “Clearly government officials haven’t done their homework. As well as raising a few eyebrows amongst animal protectionists, this also fuels concerns of government corruption – given that DEFRA’s chief veterinary advisor on the Bill is a bird keeper, breeder and self-confessed attendee of illegal pet markets in a private capacity.”

- \* For more information, please contact Elaine Toland on 01273 674253
- \* We have an ISDN line for broadcast quality interviews and jpegs of UK pet markets.
- \* APA can be contacted for a free campaign pack on 01273 674253 or info@apa.org.uk

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