

Showground in muddle over illegal bird market

The Animal Protection Agency (APA), a national organisation campaigning against the trade in wild animals for pets, has today called on the Bath & West Showground not to allow an illegal bird market this Sunday, 24th April 2005. Even though the Showground risks prosecution and a damaged reputation as well as losing its charitable status by proceeding with the event, it is still undecided as to whether or not to allow illegal trading on its premises.

Last week, Mendip District Council ruled that traders operating at the proposed bird market would be breaking the law if they sold birds. Offences under the Pet Animals Act 1951, which prohibits the sale of pets in markets and public places, carry a maximum penalty of three month's imprisonment. The Showground would be complicit in these crimes if it were to proceed.

APA investigators, including a vet, gathered evidence at a previous illegal bird market at the Bath & West Showground last year on 26 September. Thousands of birds were on sale, many of them wild-captured from other countries. Some birds were showing clear signs of illness and many exhibited stressed behaviour.

Says Elaine Toland, Director of APA;

"Over the years, many thousands of birds have been sold at the Showground in consistently shocking conditions. Traders who travel from one illegal market to another to sell their birds have attended the event and the disturbing question of where birds are stored in between sales remains largely unanswered. We hope that the Showground will abide by the law, which was introduced to protect animal welfare."

Should the event proceed, the Animal Protection Agency will attend, along with Council Inspectors, to gather evidence of transactions so that prosecutions can follow.

- * For more information, please contact Elaine Toland on 01273 674253
- * Footage and jpeg images of last year's event are available.
- * We have an ISDN line for broadcast quality interviews.