

P-05-933 Ban Goldfish from being given away at funfairs. #OperationGoldfish, Correspondence – Petitioner to Committee, 17.06.20

Thank you for taking time to discuss this matter and for investigating the matter further. I note that your letter states the showman guild ensures all members take account of the welfare of goldfish. Can you please confirm how they go about this? The letter states the member takes account of the welfare, which implies the onus is on the member. Are the members or the guild itself monitored or checked? What measures are in place to ensure they are complying with the guidelines? If checks are not undertaken by the guild, as the responsibility is on the member; if they are undertaking incorrect practise then would they change or improve their practise and would they know they were acting incorrectly? Without refresher or checks in place, people can often become complacent or information becomes outdated. I can confirm that within a pet shop we have spot checks, mystery shoppers, area manager checks, we have to document all sales and customers details in line with our licensing agreement. We monitor the water, we have exams, tests and constant refreshers to keep our expert advice correct and up to date.

It says that for over 50 years they have had a resolution to its constitution ensuring all members take account of the welfare of the goldfish, however over those 50 years our society has evolved, culture changes, what is perceived as right/wrong changes, what should/shouldn't happen changes, laws change. Has their protocol been updated in the last 50 years to reflect this? Has it even been reviewed throughout the 50 years and if so, how often? Have they supplied a copy of their protocol/advice they give to members? If it hasn't been updated or changed then it clearly is outdated like the tradition which they are trying to defend.

I also note that they claim other prizes are available. Is it compulsory for every stall to offer alternatives? Has this claim been verified, as when I visited Barry island there are large signs which state "Goldfish if you win" (see link to newspaper article which has pictures of the stand) – they are clearly heavily promoting live animal prizes compared to alternatives. Are the alternative prizes on different stalls? Are alternative prizes only available if requested? What are the other prize choices they offer? A high value pet with a small plastic tub for a home versus a small stuffed toy with a nominal value? Surely a high proportion of people would prefer a perceived higher valued item to get their monies worth. As there is the option to win a goldfish, of course consumers will opt for this, it seems fun and the stalls push this. By simply banning this archaic tradition then people wouldn't have the option to win a goldfish on a whim, without education.

It is reassuring that they do offer alternative prizes, which shows that if they stopped offering live animals as prizes then they have an alternative/ back up they can use. As the guild reference alternative prizes it is evident that these alternatives are successful for them, so why still use these poor live animals?

Also is it morally right for Welsh Government to continue to allow live animals to be given away as prizes? We as a society have evolved and animal welfare is a very important topic. Thankfully a lot of archaic traditions have stopped and this is a tradition which should be

stopped.

The showmen's guild argue that there isn't any difference between obtaining a goldfish from a funfair or a pet shop, whereas in fact there are a lot of very distinct differences. In pet shops I know that (as I work in one myself) there are certain laws you must adhere to, animal welfare criteria that must be met and external bodies can turn up unannounced to perform a pet welfare report at any time, which if failed holds serious consequences for duty and all managers. You must hold a pet shop license to be able to sell animals (to obtain this you must again, adhere to strict animal welfare guidelines) which has to be renewed every year. Pet shops are permanent buildings whereas some funfairs that offer prize goldfish are travelling ones, which begs the question where is the security? What happens to any goldfish that they didn't manage to sell or 'give away' over the temporary summer period they were set up? You often hear horror stories of them being thrown away, chucked in the sea, given away for free or just binned at the end of a season, which all sounds far fetched, however, what are you to do with a plastic tub of hundreds of goldfish you didn't manage to sell?

When a person goes to a funfair they do not go with the intention of leaving that day with a 25 year commitment of a pet that can ultimately cost hundreds of pounds and eventually need a tank the size of your sofa. It is entirely a win made on an impulse. I'm not denying that going to a pet shop can lead to an impulse buy of a goldfish, however, there will be a professional aquatics expert on hand to ensure the customer is fully capable and understanding of the needs of this pet they are looking to purchase and they can be refused a sale if necessary. In my experience, 9 times out of 10 when I explain to a customer that a goldfish cannot simply go into a bowl of unfiltered water and that they will in fact live up to 25+ years that customer will swiftly change their minds and go for a much easier option. Also, if you do win a goldfish as a prize from a funfair, how long is it in the bag for before you go home? Lots of people travel over half an hour to go to funfairs, and the maximum time a fish should be kept in a plastic bag for moving purposes is half an hour, so that fish is already suffering before it's even arrived at it's new home. Once you have arrived home, where are you going to put the fish? As they require a minimum of a 50 litre tank that has been set up for at least 72 hours prior to purchase, to ensure the water has been dechlorinated, the filter is functioning correctly and the water has reached the right temperature, of about 18 – 22 degrees Celsius.

If the act of giving away an animal as a prize was blanket banned across the country, then this temptation to win an animal would be eradicated for good, saving countless animals lives and removing them from the category of a 'prize' and ultimately giving a living animal the respect it deserves; which would be a huge step forward in the animal rights movement.

It is also disappointing to read that the showman's guild has given incorrect information in relation to the RSPCA. The leaflet they offer is not from the RSPCA and in fact my previous letter states how the information is incorrect; so much so it could result in the death of the animal. I have, and continue to work closely with the RSPCA who also support the motion to ban goldfish being given away as a prize. If they were working with the showman's guild then the RSPCA wouldn't be in support of this motion as they would be confident the animal's

welfare was cared for. The RSPCA has successfully achieved the support of the Newport, Conwy and Caerphilly Councils that have passed the ban, again confirming that the RSPCA do not work with the showman's guild. Please see attached email from Lewis from the RSPCA, which categorically confirms that they do not work with them and have not provided any support or information to use in their leaflets. As the showman guild has provided incorrect information about their working relationship with the RSPCA, then it does beg the question of the integrity of the guild and also the accuracy of the rest of the information they have provided to Welsh Government.

<https://www.barryanddistrictnews.co.uk/news/17718471.woman-aims-to-stop-fairs-goldfish-prizes/> - This is the link to the picture of the goldfish stand at Barry Island.

<https://www.barryanddistrictnews.co.uk/news/17932235.barry-operation-goldfish-campaigner-supports-caerphilly-council-pets-prize-concern/> - Here is a link to show OpGold working with the RSPCA in getting Caerphilly councils support in the motion.

Please also see attached an email from [REDACTED], the public affairs adviser, for RSPCA Cymru confirming that the information the showmen's guild has provided is incorrect.