

John F. Robins, Secretary, Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL), c/o Animal Concern,  
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Animal Concern Advice Line (ACAL) is a recognised Scottish charity: No. SC030982.  
Animal Concern Advice Line was established in 2001 to take on the charitable work of Animal  
Concern which was founded as the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society in 1876.  
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Roseanna Cunningham MSP,  
Minister for Animal Welfare,  
The Scottish Government.

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

After four weeks of fruitless correspondence with other agencies I write to you concerning the Moffat Sheep Races which are due to take place this coming Sunday, August 13th.

When first contacted about this I was inclined to dismiss it as just a bit of fun with a few sheep running around in a field. On investigation I discovered it involves numerous races of 6 sheep being chased by children along the tarmacked main road in Moffat while being noisily cheered on by upwards of 5,000 spectators and the occasional barking dog. If you want to see the sheep races from the last couple of years please go to YouTube and search for "Moffat Sheep Race".

These races blatantly contravene the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act of 2006. Section 24 of the Act requires that an animal is kept in a suitable environment, is able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns and is protected from suffering (including mental suffering such as fear and stress), injury and disease. The main road through a town is not a suitable environment for sheep. Having stuffed jockeys strapped to their backs and being forced to race each other while being chased by wee boys is not a normal ovine behaviour pattern.

Thankfully the 2006 Act allows enforcing agencies to take action to stop an event which is likely to cause suffering, including stress and fear, before that suffering is caused.

I thought it would be a simple matter of asking the enforcing authorities (in this instance Dumfries & Galloway [D&G] Council) to use the Act to advise the organisers, Moffat Promotions, not to proceed with the event.

Instead of taking the obvious action D&G decided to consult with the Scottish SPCA and APHA Scotland. The Council are now passing the buck saying it is up to the Scottish SPCA and/or APHA Scotland to take action. This is despite the fact that after I raised the matter of permissions with the Council they started the process of granting Moffat Promotions a Performing Animals Act License to permit the event to go ahead.

As the animal welfare buck stops with you I ask you please to intervene and put a stop to this unnecessary cruelty. I also suggest that such events be specifically banned under your long awaited new legislation to restrict performing animal acts in circuses.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins,  
ACAL

PS I have copied this e-mail to the agencies involved and to all MSPs as many are likely to be contacted by their constituents over this matter.