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News Release

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A Primateologist Confirms the Obvious: Hamburg Family Fun Fest Organizers, A Race with Capuchin Monkeys Chained to Dogs' Backs is not Family Fun

CANTON, MI—Beginning today through June 18, in the name of family entertainment, the Hamburg Family Fun Fest will feature a “Banana Derby” in which “Capuchin monkeys in tiny horse jockey outfits rid[e] on the backs of dogs, racing around the track” (see [event website](#)). They will “perform” several times daily during the Fest, including two performances on opening day with temperatures in the 90s, and with the National Weather Service having issued an excessive heat warning. The event also includes a “mobile zoo” with camels, llamas, goats, monkeys, reptiles, birds, kangaroos, who will be on display throughout the Fest.

Attorneys for Animals, Inc., (AFA) a Canton, Michigan-based organization of animal attorneys and advocates condemns the use of animals in the guise of entertainment. It calls on both the Hamburg Enhanced Recreational Organization (H.E.R.O), a nonprofit sponsoring the event and the Hamburg Township Board of Trustees to ensure the safety of all animals at this year’s event, and to make this the final year that the Fun Fest includes animals.

The AFA board is united in opposition to the Derby with the Humane Society of Huron Valley, the Humane Society of the United States/Michigan, and Michigan Humane in calling out this inhumane event. We support their efforts to alert Livingston County Animal Control about the at-risk animals, and to urge that animal control officers be on hand to monitor the health and well-being of all animals on display or performing at the Fest.

The event raises serious concerns about the welfare of the animals who are forced to perform. Young children who often have an innate love of animals, will see the “Banana Derby” and petting zoo as proper ways to treat wild, domestic and companion animals.

We talked to AFA member Francine L. Dolins, Ph.D., a primateologist and Associate Professor of Psychology, Department of Behavioral Sciences, University of Michigan-Dearborn about the impact on the monkeys:

Capuchin monkeys in the wild live in rainforests in large social groups where they have the choice and control to avoid fearful events. In the 'Banana Derby', these monkeys are instead tethered by chains to a racing dog and surrounded by loud sounds and crowds. Each and every time they are chained to a dog and put through a race, it must be a terrifying experience for these capuchins, and for the dogs too. No living being should have to live through day after day of being terrified.

It is horribly cruel what is inflicted on these monkeys for entertainment: chained to a dog racing around crowds of people and loud sounds from which the monkeys cannot escape. This is exactly the type of situation that creates terror and permanent emotional harm to a vulnerable animal who can't flee, can't fight, can't adapt or cope. The animal can only suffer.

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