

Director of Productions
ITV Studios UK
2 Waterhouse Square
Holborn
London
EC1N 2AE

Tuesday 19th March 2019

Dear _____,

Regarding: Vets' serious animal welfare concerns related to the use of live snakes on I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here! 2018 UK series

The British Veterinary Association is writing to you as the national representative body for the veterinary profession, representing over 18,000 members across the UK.

Our members have voiced serious concerns around the welfare of the animals used during tasks on the UK edition of I'm A Celebrity... Get Me Out Of Here. An episode that aired in November 2018 and featured a snake as part of a contestant task was of particular concern.

The vets who have flagged this episode have concerns relating to the snakes displaying clear signs of distress as Emily Atack placed her hand into the box. The evidence of stress was ignored, Ms Atack continued with the task, resulting in the snake being flung onto the floor after her in fear.

We are particularly concerned that this series has a long history of welfare concerns being raised but not being addressed in a robust way. Another example of clear signs of distress from a variety of reptiles can be seen in an episode aired last year featuring Harry Redknapp crawling through small containers filled with bearded dragons, snakes and a crocodile. A decade on from your episode featuring a contestant killing and eating a rat (without any visible slaughter expertise), we remain concerned that animals' needs are not being met during the production of this show and they are often being harmed in the interests of sensationalism and lowbrow entertainment.

We would like to understand the protocols that your production company have in place to protect the health and welfare of the animals that you use, and would be grateful for a swift answer from you to the following questions

1. Do you have a veterinarian present on set where live animals are present?
2. Are you aware of the five animal welfare needs as per the Animal Welfare Act, and do you apply this across the development of the programme?

According to the 2006 Animal Welfare Act (legislation in England and Wales for owners and keepers) it is stated that any person responsible for an animal has a duty of care. BVA does not believe that the above scenes display compliance with a duty of care as the animals show clear distress and no intervention is seen to be taken to mitigate this or avoid harm.

We are aware that some other versions of "I'm a Celebrity" aired outside of the UK have a veterinarian working on set where animals are present. For example, the Australian version of the show has a presenter who is a vet and plays an active role in advising on the welfare of all animals involved.

As per our advertising guidelines (referenced below) BVA believes that it is necessary to have a vet on set to monitor the health and welfare of any animal used in entertainment. We assume that you have animal handlers on set to care for and manage the animals as part of the programme; however, the skills and training that a vet has provides them with an added layer of expertise to effectively assess and manage any health or welfare issues or recognise signs of distress. We would strongly recommend that a vet is on set where any animals are present.

The welfare of animals used on television or other media outlets should be of the highest standard as this influences public behaviours and views on appropriate treatment of animals. We have recently produced some comprehensive advertising guidelines for the responsible use of pet animals in advertising, which I would ask you to read and apply in your programming. This document gives several recommendations for ways that production companies can make sure that they adhere to the five animal welfare needs.

We would also like to extend an open invitation to work with BVA to discuss and advise on the use of animals in your upcoming 2019 series.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dan". The signature is enclosed within a hand-drawn oval shape.

Daniella Dos Santos BSc BVetMed MRCVS

BVA Junior Vice President

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