

Large-Scale Bust with 200 Fighting Birds Seized in Sacramento County Highlights Rampant Cockfighting in Golden State

Incident is another indicator of the need for federal law to eradicate illegal staged animal fighting, animal welfare groups say

SACRAMENTO, CA, UNITED STATES, December 9, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action and the Center for a Humane Economy, applauded the work of Sacramento County Sheriff's Office for uncovering a large-scale cockfighting ring with 200 fighting roosters found at a home with dozens of people who fled the scene, even crashing through fences with their vehicles to escape authorities.



Cockfighting Match

Cockfighting is a felony in most states but remains a misdemeanor in California. Dogfighting, however, is a felony in the Golden State. This must be corrected, animal wellness groups say, to deter this egregious crime in a state where cockfighting runs rampant. In November 2021, Animal Wellness Action issued [a report on illegal cockfighting in California](#), calling it one of the top illegal cockfighting states in the nation.

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*Wayne Pacelle, President of
Animal Wellness Action*

“Cockfighting is cruel and barbaric, and it is always bound up with other crimes,” said Wayne Pacelle, president of Animal Wellness Action, which is leading a national campaign against staged animal fighting. “We applaud the Sacramento County Sheriffs' Office and animal control

officers for working to make the community safer. We must have a zero-tolerance policy for all staged animal fights, and that means robust enforcement of anti-cruelty laws.”

California is also hotspot for cockfighting. There is massive trafficking of fighting birds across the border of Mexico where cockfighting is legal. In fact just two weeks ago, a major Mexican cartel figure involved in cockfighting was arrested in Riverside County. With the traffic going both ways, cockfighters smuggle hundreds of thousands of fighting birds to cartel-controlled cockfighting arenas in Mexico and they also move birds from south of the border into the United States for illegal fights in our nation.

Read more at [Illegal cockfighting another symptom of lax border security | Sacramento Bee](#)

Cockfighting is also tied to disease outbreaks. Ten of the 15 virulent Newcastle Disease outbreaks in the United States originated from illegally smuggled game fowl for cockfighting, causing major disease epidemics in southern California in 2002-03 and 2018-20. At least 16 million birds died and more than \$1 billion (inflation-adjusted numbers) was spent to control vND outbreaks.

“Gamefowl are high-risk disease vectors and reservoirs because they are widely sold and traded, deliberately mixed under stressful conditions at fighting derbies, reared under poor biosecurity, and have experienced husbandry or fighting practices that spread disease,” said Jim Keen, D.V.M., Ph.D., the director of veterinary science for the Center for a Humane Economy. Dr. Keen issued a full report on cockfighting and avian diseases that can [be read here](#).

Congress is now considering The FIGHT Act, H.R. 2742 and S. 1529 to address the enforcement problems. The legislation would allow for citizen suits against perpetrators, ban online gambling on animal fights, allow for criminal forfeiture of property used to commit animal fighting crimes, and forbid the use of the U.S. mail to ship adult roosters.

The FIGHT Act has endorsements from 750 organizations and agencies, including the National Sheriffs’ Association, from the domains of animal welfare, law enforcement, agriculture, gaming, and conservation. No other animal welfare legislation has as much bipartisan support as H.R. 2742 and S. 1529. Nineteen U.S. House members, 14 Democrats and 5 Republicans, are cosponsors of H.R. 2742.

Twenty of California’s 58 counties restrict private ownership of large numbers of fighting roosters. The counties without these local restrictions see more illegal cockfighting, according to AWA. Santa Barbara County was the latest county to take action to deter cockfighting by approving an anti-cockfighting ordinance, and that measure was enacted in January 2024.

ABOUT

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) whose mission is to help animals by promoting laws and regulations at federal, state and local levels that forbid cruelty to all animals. The group also works to enforce existing anti-cruelty and wildlife protection laws. Animal Wellness Action believes helping animals helps us all. X: @AWAction_News.

The Center for a Humane Economy is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(3) whose mission is to help animals by helping forge a more humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both. The Center believes helping animals helps us all. X: @TheHumaneCenter.

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