

# Dog Fighting

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## The Issue: Dog Fighting

### The Argument

Dog Fighting not only is abusive to dogs, but dog fighting rings are breeding grounds for illegal activity. With most street fights serving as networks for illegal drug and firearm distribution, dog fighting is dangerous for the community and fatal for the dogs.

### The Facts:

#### Dog Fighting Quick Facts

- It is impossible to tell the exact number of dogs used, injured and killed in dog fighting rings annually. However, due to the number of busted illegal rings, and animals entering shelters bearing evidence of fighting, organizations like ASPCA estimate the number of dogs used for fighting annually is in the **tens of thousands**<sup>2</sup>
- Dog fighting is a felony offense in all 50 US states (plus D.C, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands).<sup>2</sup>
- An estimated 40,000 people are active in dog fighting in the United States<sup>1</sup>
- The average length of a dog fight is 1-2 hours <sup>1</sup>
- Most fights end when a dog quits (by turning away from their opponent), is left unfightable, or dies.
- Pit bulls are the most common dogs used for dog fighting in the US and make up about 30% of all dogs in shelters<sup>2</sup>

#### The Dogs Used

The dogs who are most commonly bred for fighting are broadly referred to as Pit Bulls. The most common specific breeds used are Staffordshire terriers, American Staffordshire terriers, American bulldogs, and American pit bull terriers.<sup>2</sup>

# Training<sup>1</sup>

Since most dogs used for fighting are obtained as puppies, they are conditioned for fighting their entire childhood, until they reach fighting weight. Training methods used with the hopes of turning these dogs from the companion animals we know and love into vicious angry killers, are just as barbaric as you'd imagine. Some of the most common training methods include

- **Treadmills-** Dogs are forced to run on treadmills to increase stamina
- **Cartmills-** Similar to a pony ride apparatus at a carnival, dogs are chained to metal arms that jut out of a large steel center ring. A small animal, like a cat or a bunny is used as bait and harnessed in front of them. They run around the mill trying to get at the animal. The dog is usually "rewarded" with the small animal after completion of the drill.
- **Spring pole-** A toy is dangled at the top of a pole. Dogs jump to get the toy and hold on for as long as possible. This aims to strengthen jaw and leg muscles.
- **Weighted Chains-** When dogs are not in training or fighting, they are usually chained up. Very early on, animal enslavers will affix very large heavy chains to the dogs hoping they will "grow into them" and that it will strengthen their neck muscles.
- **Drugs-** Dogs are often given supplements and PED's to make them more aggressive and stronger.

## Where Do These Fights Happen?

Dog Fights happen wherever they are least likely to get caught. In urban areas, it will be on private property or abandoned warehouses or factories. In more rural areas it could be outdoor pits or barns.

## The Fight

*There are two kinds of dog fighters: professional and amateur.*

### Professional Fighters:

Professional fights have very strict rules. They often involve gambling and receive the most publicity in the dog-fighting world.

*An Outline of A Professional Dog Fight Below:<sup>1</sup>*

- The dog fighting rings, or "pits" are generally 14 to 20 feet square and 2 to 3 feet high.
- Diagonal 'scratch lines' are drawn on opposite corners of the pits, behind which the dogs must remain until the referee commands them to be released.
- During the match, the dogs maul each other until a 'turn' is called. A 'turn' refers to the act of one dog actually turning away from his opponent without trying to grab a hold of him.

- When this occurs, the dogs are separated briefly and returned to their handlers. The dogs are repositioned behind the 'scratch lines' and the match resumes once the referee orders that the dog that turned be released.
- The dog must then 'scratch' his opponent, or run to the opposite corner and attack the dog that is still being held by the handler. If this happens, the opponent is released and the fight continues, if not the match is over.
- The process of separating the dogs continues each time there is a turn or if both dogs fail to grab hold of each other for a specified amount of time.
- Matches end when a dog quits or dies, when a handler pulls a dog from the ring, if a dog jumps out of the pit, or if the fight is raided by the police.

### **"Street" or Amateur Fighters<sup>1</sup>**

*Fraught with gang activity, drugs, guns, and gambling, street fights are dangerous for the dogs, people, and communities in which they occur.*

- Obtaining fighting dogs is quite easy for gang members. They can be bought as puppies for a few hundred dollars, gang members can also breed them.
- Dog fighting is extremely lucrative for gang members. They also use dog fighting as a forum to distribute narcotics. Raids of dog fighting rings bring up hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of narcotics and firearms.
- Fighting dogs have a dual purpose for drug lords and gang members. They are viewed as alarm systems, security systems, status symbols and attack systems. They are not viewed as companions. Simply as means to an end. A violent, angry, fighting machine whose only role is to serve thy master and guard thy house.

## **Why Fight Dogs?**

Like most industries of animal cruelty, the majority of people fight dogs for the money. Gambling is a prevalent part of dog fighting. Breeders who sell dogs used for fighting can make thousands of dollars on a single puppy.

Fame is another factor. When someone fights dogs, they are not the ones facing injury, mutilation, and death. However, because these dogs are viewed as nothing more than objects, used only for their strength and brutality, the human enslaver is the one who gets the glory when the dog they own wins.

For some spectators who do not bet or have a dog in the ring, sadism and desensitization seem to be the only logical explanation. In areas of the world where dog fighting is more common, people may have been seeing this since they were children. They view it as no more inhumane and as entertaining as people from other countries may view a day at the circus or rodeo.

## How Media Plays a Role<sup>4</sup>

In places where dog fighting is NOT illegal, social media platforms like Facebook play a key role. Breeders sell their dogs via Facebook, and can reach a much wider audience than by word of mouth. Dog fighters also post fights on Facebook, compare stats, congratulate winners, and plan their next fight. Social Media often plays a key role in dog fighting as a business and community.

You can also find pro-dog fighting websites. These websites and publications skirt around animal cruelty laws by taking advantage of freedom of speech allowances by claiming their websites are to be “viewed as fiction” or “for educational purposes only.” They even publicly condemn dog-fighting and tout that any and all glorification of dog-fighting is “complete fiction.”

### Common Publications Viewed by Dog-Fighters<sup>1</sup>

- The Sporting Dog Journal
- Your Friend and Mine
- American Game Dog Times
- The Scratch Line
- Face Your Dogs
- The Pit Bull Chronicle
- The Pit Bull Reporter
- The American Warrior

## What Can You Do?<sup>3</sup>

If you live in a country where dog fighting is illegal, use this to your advantage. If you know of a dog fighting operation happening in your town, call in an anonymous tip to the police or animal rights organization. If you are able to get documentation, it is of utmost importance.

If there are no laws prohibiting using dogs for fighting, consider lobbying your government for change.

- Use existing animal cruelty laws to make your case as to why dog fighting should be illegal.
- Find government representatives, lawyers, or non-profits who are on your side.
- Contact larger global animal rights organizations. They may be able to provide additional resources.
- If engaging with the government is not an option, report any pro-dog fighting content to Facebook.
- Urge others to also report pro-dog fighting activity. Even though dog fighting is not illegal where you are, Facebook may still take down comments, profiled or pages with many reports.
- Platforms like Facebook play such a crucial role in the success of dog fighting, getting key words or phrases banned can cause a huge hit to the dog fighting enterprise.

Regardless of where you live, donate to organizations who put efforts into abolishing dog fighting. Find a list of organizations here.

## The Lingo:1

**Campaign:** the career of a fighting dog

**Champion:** a dog who has won at least three fights

**Convention:** a very large dog fighting event, sometimes with activities, music, and food

**Dogman:** a professional trainer or handler

**Grand champion:** a dog which has at least five wins and is undefeated

**Gameness:** tenacity and willingness to fight (is also used sometimes outside of fighting)

**Prospect:** a young dog which is aggressive and is thought of as being a good candidate for a fighting dog

**Scratch lines:** lines in a dog fighting ring behind which the dogs start in the match

**Stud:** a male dog used for breeding

**The keep:** the training which a dog undergoes leading up to a fight, usually lasting about six weeks

**The show:** the actual dog fight itself

**Breeding stand:** a barrel or stand that a female dog is tied to while a muzzled male dog mates with her.

## The Champions

### *Organizations Working To End DogFighting*

#### The Anti-Dog Fighting Campaign

- *A Facebook centered campaign focusing on raising awareness of and ending dog fighting world-wide. They take anonymous tips about dog fighting rings and pursue legal action.*

#### People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA)

- *A global program that fights for animal liberation in all realms. They have made significant headway in the prosecution and conviction of dog fighters. Including millionaire football celebrity Michael Vick.*

### The Humane Society of the United States

- A US focused organization that is the largest animal welfare non-profit in the country. HSUS provides resources for spotting, documenting, and taking action against animal fighting. They also provide training for law enforcement equipping them with the tools necessary to end dog fighting in the county.

### American Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

- Offering educational and legal resources for those wishing to put an end to dog fighting in the United States.

## **The Resources**

1. <https://www.animallaw.info/article/detailed-discussion-dog-fighting>
2. <https://www.asPCA.org/investigations-rescue/dogfighting>
3. <https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-w0682-pub.pdf>
4. [Inside Iraqi Kurdistan's Bloody Dogfighting Scene](#)

## **Further Watching**

*USA Specific:*

Breaking The Chain- PETA Documentary